The Socialite

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The Socialite [Completed]

By BrittanyAnnRoberts

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Chapter 1

The Socialite Preface

Preface

You think you know someone…

Do you really?

When you are faced with a sight that hurts your eyes, how do you really know? It could be anybody besides the person you love…

Chapter 2

The Socialite [1] Immediate Friends

Chapter One

Immediate friends

As the wind came gusting through the car window it blew Nora s hair all over her face, she tried to push it back but it was to no avail. As the sun warmed her face, she closed her eyes, underneath her eyelids she could see the shadows moving over her as the sun slipped in and out behind the branches. She re-opened eyes and looked down at her little pale arms, peering out the car window she caught faint glimpses of Lake Wylie in the distance. The car started to shake as it moved from the road to gravel. Nora

continued to look out of the window noticing the trees as they speed by the window.

"Nora? Edmund Greenhill, Nora's father, a thin man, with hollow cheeks, an olive complexion, deep jade eyes, black hair and moustache- looked over shoulder to Nora with a smile on his face.

Ethel, Nora's mother, turned back in her seat to smile at her daughter. She was an equally thin women, with full cheeks a pale complexion, green eyes and ginger hair,

Nora differed from her parents in looks, she wasn't thin, she had a rounded face, a complexion like her mother, long chocolate brown curls-that shone with a hint of gold in the sun light, and light blue eyes with dark blue rings around the irises

"Can you tell us some of the trees we are going past?" his question directed out of his window, speaking with confidence, he knew that Nora would know the answer.

Edmund and Ethel took Nora's education very seriously, starting to tutor her at the age of four. Nora

looked out the window and studied the trees, time passed but she eventually answered.

"Basswood"- Nora spoke with the same confidence as her father - "Georgia oak, Spruce pine and Hemlock?" she let out a deep breath.

Her father leaned back over his seat, smiled then turned to face the road again.

"Very good!!"- He praised her-"though you forgot sourwood" he added smugly, Nora blushed sheepishly and looked down at her flowery dress.

The Rolls Royce silver ghost slowed down on the gravel, the crackling under the tires continued, breaking through the last of the trees and the lake came into view again permanently this time, shortly followed buy the Greenhill's holiday house.

This house had been used every summer since Nora was born, in 1918, it was all part of her child hood, she distinctly remembered the white weatherboard house, with its blue windows, shingle roof and large porch that stretched out in front of it toward the lake.

The large spruce pine with its many leafy branches and swing that hung from a high supported branch, stood in front of the house.

The car rolled to a slow stop, Edmund cut the ignition and eagerly Nora clicked the handle, springing lightly from the car, her feet sunk a little into the sand ground. Nora looked around; the surroundings had changed not much in the past year. But Nora was now six, and she noticed more.

The ground, a compilation of sand, gravel, leaves and driftwood fragments, running up to met the front steps of the house, which then stretched down to met with the aqua-marine of the lake. A long ray of sunlight sparkled off the waters surface, along the shoreline was a small jetty; tied to a post was a wooden boat, with its ores resting in it, which was bobbing up and down on ripples created by the light breeze.

In the far distance were the towering treetops of the rangers, the lush greenery of the encroaching forest encircled the house and beach.

It smelt the same, it sounded the same.

The air was filled with the scent of lake water, tree sap, wild daisies, and even the smell of tobacco, off her fathers pipe, was beginning to join the mix in the air.

The sounds of the local wildlife were everywhere, crickets buzzing, birds singing, the muffled steps of Deer and Elk sprinting through the forest and the clear sound of water breaking on the shore.

Nora started to walk forward at a brisk pace, three of her tiny foot steps matched one of her mothers. The ground crunched under her feet with each stride as she approached the house, she reached the bottom of the porch steps.

Ethel helped her, taking her hand, ascending up the stairs. When they got to the top Nora let her hand drop from her mothers, and ran to the large pine front door, reaching out with both hands she grasped the handle and turned it, the door clicked.

Effortlessly Ethel reached out with one hand and nudged the door open, it creaked, shuddering to a stop.

The inside of the house was dark; all the windows in the house were closed off buy large, thick, floral curtains. Nora stepped over the threshold, walking along the golden path of light, her feet echoed on the hardwood floor. Ethel walked into the house after her, striding directly into the living room.

She dodged a coffee table that was barely visible in the dark shadows when she reached the window she grasped each half of the curtains and threw them open.

Sunrays spilt into the room, like running water from a tap. Ethel quickly moved to the other two windows either side of the fire place, Nora stood in the last section of darkness and was shortly showered by the light that came flooding in, she grinned, stood still, closed her eyes and let the sun warm her face. The house was familiar and comfortable to Nora and like the breathtaking scenery, it hadn't changed in the last year.

The sitting room was dressed with leather sofas and armchairs, a persian rug, pine wood coffee tables with an empty crystal vase dangling overhead was a

small crystal chandelier. All of which sat in front of a large stone fire place, cream walls circled the room with small paintings, on nearly every wall. This set the décor throughout the rest of the house.

Nora ran straight up the stairs to her bedroom, walking at a steady pace to the end of the hall, she stood in front of a wooden door which stood ajar.

She peeked in, the room was dark and still, breathing heavily she pushed the heavy door open. She crossed the room to the window, attempting to open the curtains.

She clicked the latch on the window, and they flew open by the wind. The wafting smell of Pollen cam through the window on the light current of air.

Nora's bedroom had the best outlook, as it was on the other side of the spruce pine that was blocking the view out of most windows.

Turning around she looked at her room. The large bed -that would have been better suited for a seven-foot tall adult sat against the wall, the pine frame,

was carved intricately, white clouds of material billowed over the canopy.

At the foot of the bed was a toy box that was full of teddies, dollies, and books. It wasn't necessary that Nora had all these toys when they were on holidays, but her parents tended to spoil her.

Next to the bed, by the window was a rocking chair that Edmund had gotten made especially for her, and she had an identical one in her bedroom at home.

Ethel appeared at the door smiling "Glad to be back?"

"Yes" replied Nora happily.

"Mary-Ellen won't be arriving till four o'clock,"

Nora nodded, Mary-Ellen Thorn was the Greenhill's African house maid, she was responsible for cooking all the meals the maintenance of the house. Nora liked her a lot, she was a very kind person.

She had a much tougher up-bringing then Nora, but the Greenhill's had been very good to her and treated her fairly, not like some of the people that her parents knew.

"and the Finns are due here in the morning" Ethel said, smiling as she left the room.

Nora stayed in her room for the rest of the day, getting herself set up for the long summer ahead.

Dinner was quiet, and Nora fell into a deep dreamless sleep awaiting the day ahead.

In the morning Nora was woken by the sound of crunching gravel as the Finns car rolled up to the house. Mary-Ellen dressed Nora and took her down stairs to greet them.

Martha Finn had been Ethel's best friend since she was seven, but moved away from Columbia with husband. Martha had a small face, her hair was a light brown and hung next to her cheeks in tight curls.

When Martha had finished greeting Ethel and Edmund she walked over to Nora, bending down to greet her.

"Hello Nora" Martha said in a soft voice "How have you been you?"

"Always good" replied a deeper voice behind them.

It was Ted, Martha's husband, he was a tall man, his dark hair and moustache matched his hazel eyes.

Nora beamed when she saw him "How are you, darling?" he asked, he picked gave her a tight hug.

Jack, the child of Martha and Ted, walked to stand next to Martha. His hair was fair, a brilliant shade of blond, one green eye and one blue.

"Jack honey, you remember Nora, don't you?" Martha said gesturing to Nora, she smiled "Play together." Martha said, turning and walking into the house.

Jack and Nora were alone.

"Hello..." Nora said "You do remember me, don't you?"

"Yes, I do" Jack replied

Nora, started to walk slowly down the beach, Jack followed closely.

"Where do you live, because I heard my parents saying that you were moving to Columbia?"

"We live in Chicago, we are moving to Columbia"

"Do you like to play tag?" Nora blurted out.

"Um...all right" Jack said "I'm it" he gave Nora a head start, then began to chase after her.

From the minute the had met, they had always been the best of friends The days changed into weeks, they became inseparable as a bond grew between them. Neither of them knew what it was, but they could tell it was a good thing, bigger and grander than anything else, their friendship grew as they did.

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Chapter 3

The Socialite [2] Words

"Jack wait for me!" Nora called to Jack who was running ahead of her in the forest.

She ran past the broad tree trunks, her arms hitting the fern fonds on the ground. Her heart was beating frantically, making it harder for her to breath.

"Come on Nora!" Jack yelled, Nora slowed, walking slowly she became further behind him.

She slumped herself against the trunk of a fallen tree, trying to calm down she looked around. The labyrinth of trees had gotten thicker and thicker as they came further into the forest, dimly lit, the tops of the trees were swaying in unison.

"Nora?" she herd Jack shout.

"Jack?" Nora called back, her throat stung "I'm back near the fallen tree." there was silence, as Jack drew closer Nora could faintly make out his footsteps.

"Ouch!" he yelped, "twig..." he appeared, stumbling on one foot toward Nora, the sight of him made her giggle.

"Why did you stop?" Jack asked rubbing his foot.

"I didn't want to go to far away form the house" Nora admitted, there was a big space underneath the tree, it was resting against another and had not given way to the pressure. Nora crawled in, the ground was damp and made her dress dirty, but she didn't care.

"Jack come under here" she said, bending down Jack looked into Nora's newfound place. There were ferns covering the other side creating a green wall.

"This can be our secret place" Nora thought out loud.

"Yeah" Jack agreed "All to ourselves, we can't show anybody else this"

Nora rolled her eyes "That's the whole point...that's why they call it 'secret'"

"Yes! Because it belongs to you...and you only" Jack said, Nora slowly nodded. She reached out and tore off a single fond, picking a up hand full of dirt she reached out her hand to Jack.

"What are you doing Nora?" he laughed.

"Keeping the secret" Nora replied.

"No." Jack said "I've got a better idea!" smiling to himself he reached inside his trousers and drew his pocket knife.

Nora laughed "What are you going to do carve the date into the log?"

Jack grimaced and pointed the knife at her stabbing the air twice, "Don't!" snapped

"No," Jack said "But I might carve the date after, it sounds like a good idea!" he turned the knife on himself.

"After? Whoa... Jack what are you doing?" Nora asked, scared.

"Keeping the secret'" Jack quoted her, holding the pointed end to his hand he cut across his palm, drawing blood, his face screwed up with pain, he held his breath and clenched his teeth together.

When he was finished and the pain was relieved in his hand, he chucked the knife to Nora, landing on her lap she cringed at it.

"Go on your turn" Jack said smiling.

Nora shook her head, she could bare the thought. "Jack no..." she said hastily "I'm not going to cut myself for this" with a weak effort Nora pushed the knife off her lap "Its not worth it, blood makes me sick anyway..."

"Wait dose that mean I cut my hand for no reason?" Jack said angrily.

"Jack you can get sick from it" Nora worried "Just at least think about how dirty that knife is!"

"Good god" Jack cried out "You are so skeptical Nora, do something fun for once if your life" Nora, tried to ignore the fact that she rarely had fun.

"Jack were only nine"

"Yes, but we act older" Jack retorted.

"Fine," Nora said, stiffly holding out her hand, she clenched her eyes shut. "I can't cut myself, your going to have to yourself"

Jack slowly picked up the knife taking Nora's hand he pressed the knife to her skin slowly he cut across her palm. As the knife pierced her skin she let out a loud wail of pain. When he finished, stiffly Nora turned around to look at a cut that stretched across her palm oozing blood.

"All right" she swallowed hard "Do what ever you were planning to do next"

Jack held out his hand, Nora gulped then took it, squeezing her hand he begun. "Never show or tell anybody about this place" Jack said "Never come here by yourself, now you make a rule"

"Um...you can only come if you get permission from the other person" Nora added.

"That's a good one" Jack commented "Never share the secret"

"Never share the secret" Nora repeated.

June was left behind and the days of August rolled by until the thirteenth arrived. The glow of the sun awoke Nora, springing from her bed she ran to the door.

Once in the hall she saw that Jack bedroom was empty, she hurriedly walked down the hall, passing the bathroom, Jack wasn't there. Down stairs Jack wasn't in the sitting room or the dinning room.

She went outside and sat on the porch and waited.

If he wasn't in the house where could Jack be?

There was a movement in the bushes, a moving shadow. Jack appeared moving fast he walked up the beach to Nora.

She realized were he had been...the secret place. He had broken the second rule that was made when they had found the secret place. Nora became

suddenly furious. He went to the secret place with out her. With out her permission!

When he came to her, he kept his head bent low, refusing eye contact.

"Where have you been?" Nora asked. She pressed her lips together into a hard line.

"No where" Jack answered, his voice sounded sincere, but Nora could see that he was lying

"Jack" Nora said calmly "I have never been a good liar... but I can still tell when I'm being lied too"

"I didn't go any were!" Jack said hastily.

"You came out of the forest. Wearing your clothes. You have no shoes... And your hair is damp" Nora pointed out the few distinguishing features of his current appearance. "You broke the second rule that we made regarding the secret place. You made that rule... and on your own, you broke it" Nora stood up from the swing.

Like the child that he was Jack's eyes started to fill with water"Nora I didn't go to the secret place"

"I don't believe you"Nora said loudly into his face.

"You should" Jack said back at her equally as loud "I'm telling you the truth"

"Well I think that you are lying to me" Nora turned and started to walk back to the house she stomped on each stepped with heavy feet.

When she go to the top of the stairs she stopped and truned to look at jack whom was still at the bottom "Nora I would never lied to you" he said looking up at her "I promise you that" his became soft, and Nora still burned with anger.

"I still don't believe you... you have broken the rule" she said through her teeth, she spat at him. Turned away them walked into the house slamming the door behind her. The time that it took her to get to the bottom of the stairs Jack had come through the door and closed it quietly.

"Nora I didn't go there. Why won't you believe me" he said just louder than a whisper so nor on the other side of the entrance could hear him but quieter so

that it didn't disturb their parents, still sleeping in their beds.

"What other place in the forest do we know of" Nora said, not turning to look at him.

Jack talked to the back of Nora's head "Exactly... I didn't go to the secret place... I went past it to another place"

"What place would that be... Fairy land" Nora joked,

Jack walked closer to Nora talking more quietly "I can't tell you... it's my own secret place "

"I can't believe that you would hide something like this to me" Nora turned around to finally look at him. But her expression wasn't forgiveness it was shear disappointment."You said that you would never lie to me...but your lying to my face right now"

"Nora... I found this place on my own" Jack said with pain in his voice.

"Then why can't you show me?...take me...tell me about it?" Nora said with Small tears in her eyes, threatening to spill.

"Because... my place. my rules" It hurt jack to say it, he held up his palm and showed a palm length bloody cut on his right hand that stretched from the bottom of his index finger to the top of his wrist, directly below his pinkie. Nora saw this cut and knew what it meant. One tear fell over her cheek than she turned and hastily walked up the stairs. Jack followed close behind her.

"Nora" he said "I'm sorry" as many times as he said her name or said the words: I' sorry, meant that Nora would speed up. She was on the verge of running when she came to her room. She grabbed the door turned on her heels and said "Go away... I never want to see you again in my life"

Nora never once left the room that day. She laid on her bed, looking at the canopy tyring to make out pictures in the wood carvings. She played with her doll house, she books- not that she was taking any notice of the writing on the pages of the pictures.

Nora wouldn't talk to anybody, or eat anything. She sat on the seat at her bay-window and flipped through the pages of a book aimlessly. Until she

turned to a page that caught her attention. There was a small slender girl with dark brown hair pulled into a bun at the back of her head, she was wearing a white dress. She was a ballet dancer. Nora liked this picture she didn't know what the girls was downing in the picture. It looked like she was jumping. Nora put the book down and tried to do what the girl was doing. She tried and failed. Falling to her knees and making any awful thudding sound on the ground. Nora recovered and walked back to the book. She flipped the page and saw the girl doing a different movement she was on one foot spinning around in a circle. Nora tried to do this as well and had a little more success with it.

Nora liked dancing, she continued to dance all through the rest of the afternoon until the sun went down. In which she change herself and went to bed.

That night she dreamt the she was a ballerina dancing on a stage in front of everybody. Her dark brown hair was pulled back into a bun, and she was wearing the same white dress as the girl in her book.

The next morning Nora woke up when the sun was sitting over the house. She had slept in till mid-day, and she was terribly hungry.

She walked down stairs to find her mother and father sitting at the table quietly eating their breakfast.

"Good morning darling" Ethel said when she saw Nora standing at the door "Are you hungry...I suspect you would be" Nora came and sat in the seat next to her mother who put a plate full of everything that was on the table. Edmund got up and walked out of the room. He blew her kiss form the door then disappeared. Nora turned to her mother "Mom where Jack and Martha and Ted?"

"Oh honey they left already" Ethel said.

* * *

The car trip back to Columbia two day later went quickly for Nora after the first half house that went the, gravel part in the road that they came to made the car rock, and that sent Nora to sleep soundly.

She woke up laying in her bed back at her house in Columbia. She sat up and look around her room. She look similar to her room back at the lake. The was less light in her room now the drapes were closed but she could see though a small crease that the sun was still up. Nora could vaguely make out her ornate pine closet on the other side of her room. Her toy chest, and rocking chair and the canopy of her bed. She slid off her bed and felt the warm embroidery of the carpet on her toes.

When she had made it down the she saw her mother sitting on a sofa reading a book in the sitting room.

She avoided her mothers questions by going through the dinning room to the courtyard out the back. She snuck through the hole in the hedge in the back corner of the garden. Jack and her made that together a year ago. For when they wanted to play. She slipped through the hole he dress got caught on a small branch she reached behind herself and yanked on it, she herd a ripping sound, and she was free. She go to her feet to check the damage. There was a small

rip in the back of her dress. She'll get Mary-Ellen to stitch it up.

She walked through the courtyard of Jacks backyard remembering all the fun that she had here. She made it to the back door, and pulled on the handle and walked in. she knew that presence would be welcomed. She came to say sorry to Jack any way so she didn't mean any harm. She walked through to the sitting room and noticed something different.

Where was everything ?

All of their furniture was gone... there was nothing left. The sofas the paintings. Nora ran from the room through the door into the library. The shelves that used to be full to the roof with different books. Was now empty there was not one book in the library.

Nora didn't know what was going on. Was this a bad dream? Was she going to wake up soon? But Nora knew that this wasn't a dream at all. She wanted so desperately to wake up but knew that it was impossible. She ran from the library. Sprinting across the front hall. The emptiness of the room made her footsteps echo loudly. She ran up the stairs taking to

of them a time. When she made it to the top step and foot got caught and she tripped. Nora looked up across form the stairs was Jacks room. The door was open...there was nothing left, besides the sun coming in through an open window shining out across his bare floor.

He was gone. Jack was gone. Where did he go? Would he ever come back? Nora didn't know any of the answers to the questions. She laid hr head down on the floor and let the tears fall from her eyes.

She didn't get so say goodbye to him. She didn't get to apologise. As quickly as Jack Finn had come into her life he was gone in the blink of an eye....

Chapter 4

The Socialite [3] Scars

Ten years later

April 1941

Chapter Three

Scars

The memories faded with the passing of time. Nora continued with her life after that last summer at Lake Wylie.

The days turned into weeks, which turned into months, and then turned into years. The seasons changed, Summer to Fall, Fall to Winter, Winter to Spring and so on. The sun blistered, the leaves fell,

the snow dusted every surface and the flowers bloomed. It was a cycle and before she new it ten years had pasted.

She went about her daily business, playing her role in society, the upper class citizen that she was.

She went to school, came home, studied, ate, drank and slept. The only enjoyment she found was at her ballet classes, which she attended four times a week. She was in the senior ballet class and the top student.

She was in her final year at Columbia high school, which resumed in a week, after spring break, in a few months she would graduate then go off to college which wasn't something that she wanted to do.

Jacks house was sold within a month and the new people moved into it a week later. Even though they had children the same age as Nora, she was the least bit interested in getting to know them. Her parents had made friends with the new neighbors quickly and they filled the Finn's place in the social circle at all the bridge games and parties, which Nora detested.

Nora was lounging in the sitting room, reading 'Mansfield Park' a Jane Austen favorite of hers.

The light breeze coming in through the window fluttered the pages of her book, Ethel appeared around the corner, leaning against the wall watching her daughter read peacefully, it made her smile. Nora noticed her mother's presence in the room; she closed her book, noticing the page number, resting it on her lap she looked up to her mother.

"Nora honey, Mary-Ellen is away for the week, and where having friends over for dinner tonight..." Nora detected a flash of anger that crossed her mothers otherwise plain expression.

Ethel hadn't changed much over the years, her skin was still pale, her face still thin her and eyes were still the same brilliant green, her hair however had changed from a rich ginger to a dull brown.

"So I was wondering if you could go into town and pick up a few things for me." There was a slight sense of pleading in her voice, Nora let a small giggle slip between her lips.

"Something funny?" Ethel demanded her brows furrowed, her lips pressed into a hard line.

Nora shook her head, with a smirk "Mom, you're cooking for these people?" she pressed, fighting back more laughter.

Nora couldn't help seeing the funny side of this as she had never seen her mother cook and assumed she didn't know how.

"Well no, I'm not cooking for these people, if that is what you are trying to hide your laughter about. Mr. March, has lent us Oscar for the night, he is going cook for us. But he's arriving at five o'clock, so I would like to get the things for him so he doesn't have to do it. Will you go?" She asked. Nora recognized nervousness in her mother's voice "Please" she begged her brows separated, and her lips smoothed out.

"Who's coming over?" Nora asked out of pure interest, thinking about whose boring stories she would have to listen to all night. Ethel breathed in then said on a heavy exhale "The new principal of your high school, they found someone shortly after

Ms. Worgan left. He's just arrived in town with his family" Nora was blissfully happy the day Gillian Worgan left Columbia high school, she was never a nice lady and nobody liked her.

"Will you go please" she repeated harsher. Nora sighed, hesitated then stood up, out of the armchair that squeaked with relief to the pressure; she tossed her book on to the chair.

"Sure" she said "What do you need?"

* * *

"Two dozen?" asked Mrs. Owens, the white wispy haired florist.

Nora nodded with a smile, not showing any teeth but with sincere politeness. Nora had always liked Petunia Owens; maybe it was her name that inspired her to become a florist. She thought while she watched Mrs. Owens wrapped the two dozen red roses that Ethel requested.

Nora love the florist, the aroma of a hundred different scents was rich in the air. The sweet smell tickled Nora's nose and she was reminded of the lake.

"Honey?" Mrs. Owens voice, with a hint of concern interrupted Nora's thoughts "Are you ok? Your order is ready"

It took Nora a few moments to realize were she was. Nora smiled, dropped more money than necessary on the counter, picking up the flowers she placed them in her already occupied hands. Turning and heading for the door a heavyset, balding man held the door open for her, she pushed her way past him not acknowledging his presence

Most likely that man knew her, everybody knew the Greenhill's and everybody knew Nora. Being a Greenhill had its advantages, but most of the time Nora hated it.

She walked to the curb just outside the flower shop that was on the corner of Main Street and Washington Avenue; fiddling with her groceries she managed to juggle two bags in one arm and the flowers in the other.

From behind she heard running footsteps approaching, she ignored the sound and prepared to cross as something suddenly hit her. She was

knocked over, her head hit the ground and the groceries spilled up the road.

Someone pinned her down "Are you ok Miss? I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to knock you over, are you hurt?" came a boys voice, he slid off her and she rolled onto her back. She opened her eyes to see a young man, perhaps the same age as her staring down at her, eyes wide with concern.

"Can I get up?" she said quietly

"Are you sure you're alright. You might have a concussion" his voice hinted his concern.

"I really think I should get up now, I'm sure I'm alright" she said in a low voice.

"Ok then" he smiled and helped her into a sitting position.

The noise of more running made the boys smiling face fall, he scrambled to his feet. Nora following him, he grabbed her arm and clenched it tightly to himself. Nora could feel the throbbing pulse of his heart in the tips of his fingers, and realize that he was shaking.

Around the corner, running. Then stopping at the sight of Nora and the boy, was four boys all of which where in the same year of high school as Nora.

Benjamin Hobart, a tall, lean, brown curly haired boy was standing in front.-clearly the leader.

Noah Scott and Angus March both equally lean with large square arms and blond hair, got his flanks.

Logan Hallett a slightly smaller boy with short black hair.

Benjamin smiled at Nora, flashing his teeth, it made her skin crawl, she grimaced at him and he chuckled to himself. Benjamin was terribly in love with Nora and dreamed of marring her one day, but for Nora, just thought of it made her nauseas.

"Good afternoon, Nora" he said in an over confident voice.

"Hello, Benjamin" Nora flatly, he smiled again at her, and moved forward, the boy who was holding on tightly to Nora tightened his grip. "What are you doing" Nora demanded. Benjamin laughed an intimidating laugh.

"Nothing you need to worry about" he said. "It doesn't involve you" he looked back at his mates who winked at him and shared chuckles between themselves.

Nora's eye brow rose, lifting her arm that the boy was attached to, she gestured to the boy and her arm "I think it involves me...look whatever it is. Stop it now." Nora demanded.

Benjamin didn't take it seriously, he'll think of some way to get to the boy later. Moving closer to Nora, his breath blew into her, and made the hairs on the back of her neck stand.

She looked him in the eyes. "Now!" she repeated.

They stood glaring at each other until Benjamin said "Anything for you." he grazed his fingers along her cheek and collar bone. Nora turned her face away from him; she shuddered at the feeling of him touching her, it made her feel uncomfortable.

"See you later then, Nora." He walked away, his friends close behind him.

Nora shook the boy off her arm "Are you ok?" She said asked, he nodded.

"Thanks, but I have it sorted" he laughed nervously.

"Boys" Nora muttered "Your welcome! So you have just moved here. Welcome to Colum-" the boy cut her off

"Actually where moving back, I used to live here, we moved to Charleston for my fathers work and were back now" his hands were idle on the sides of his body, he didn't were to put them, Nora's hands where folded neatly together.

"Are you middle class? Because Benjamin likes to pick on people that aren't upper class like me or him." she said, moving over to the mess on the street, where the food was still spilt.

"Middle class?" The boy said "No my family is upper class. We do come from money, my father just wanted to be a teacher." following Nora he began helping her.

"I'm Nora. Greenhill." She said, stretching over the pavement with her hand out. She noticed a little tear

in her lace glove that probably happen when she was on the concrete with this strange lying on top of her, she hoped that her mother wouldn't notice. He reached out and took her hand. Underneath the thin material of her glove she could feel something not right in his skin, their hand parted and she saw a scar, that reaches from the bottom of his index finger to the top of his wrist, directly below his pinkie. It looked so familiar there, she knew that she had seen this scar before.. but not on this boys hand. On her own, she had one on the same hand as him the same shape scar. She looked up to his face again.

"I'm Jack. Finn" he said

Finn, Finn why was that familiar? Nora thought.

Suddenly something almost like a bell rang in Nora's mind. Thought it wasn't a tiny bell, it was a huge one, like a bells saint Paul's cathedral. Her head was flooded with memories of Lake Wylie so clear, it could have happened yesterday. Then there was the boy. Blond hair, one blue eye one green, But, he wasn't a little boy any more he was a teenager fifteen like Nora and he was kneeling next to her. Nora

dropped the paper bag on the street and rose to her feet. Tears began to weld in her eyes. Here breath was short and ragged. Jack rose to his feet and well, smiling a crooked smile that Nora hadn't seen in eight years, but still remembered.

"Jack? Nora whispered, loud enough for him to hear her thought. He huffed and nodded

"Yes it's me-" Nora didn't wait for him to finish, all she need was a yes or no, and he gave her what she wanted.

She threw herself at him, bursting into tears, wrapping her arms around him, her sobs stained his clothes. He smiled and wrapped his arms around her retuning the gesture, he squeezed her. Nora buried her head further into his shoulder. It felt like minutes that they were holding onto each other in reunion. He finally pulled her back, her face was red and blotchy, eyes bloodshot, but made the blue of her eye stand out more.

"I can't believe it. I thought I'd see you again" she tried to say, but her voice broke at last minute and she surrendered to the next wave of tears that came.

They spilled over her eye lids and poured down her face. She grabbed at him again, holding him in her arms, not wanting him to leave. Nora thought that his time with her was limited and that he'd have to go again soon. Her head rested on his shoulder facing into his neck she breathed in, and smelled him, his scent would be locked away in her memories for later. He patted her head and laughed.

"I'm here" he said

"Don't go. Again." She sobbed he noticed the edge in her voice. He turned his head to hers resting on his shoulder he kissed her hair. Breathed in and sighed.

"I'm not going anywhere" he rested his cheek on her head. "but I'm guessing that you were" He said parting from Nora looking down at the spilled contents across the road again.

"Yes" Nora said "But... I don't think that I can use these now" she bent down and started to pick up the items again.

"Oh it's okay" Jack said.

* * *

"Thank you once again" Nora said to Jack as they turned onto her street. Jack had helped Nora re-buy fresh groceries, meat and helped walked the two mile home with Nora carrying the bags.

"It's okay...it was a pleasure" He smiled and the light form the afternoon sun seemed to radiate off his face.

"Well it saved me a lot of time" Nora started to slow down as she approached her drive-way. She turned and walked up the front path to her front door. She managed to fit the two paper bags that Jack was holding in her arms.

"Thank you" she said quietly. She turned to face the door, she had trouble trying to open it. Jack rolled his eyes, he reached out and opened the door for her.

"Um.. Thank you" Nora stepped inside and turned around. "Can I see you tomorrow?" Nora asked awkwardly. Jack smiled "Of course" he closed the door to be helpful, and he was gone.

Nora felt part of her returned when Jack came back that she hadn't had in a while. She felt complete. She

felt she was in a different room. Seeing Jack again left her on a high

"Nora?" Ethel's voice came from the sitting room. "Is that you? Where have you been?" Ethel demanded. High ended and she remembered what world she belonged to.

"Yes mom it's me" Nora said walking into the sitting room "Sorry I took so long" Nora didn't know how long she had taken until she saw the sun coming through the dinning room window- she had been gone so long that she sun had changed sides of the sky.

Her mother came into sight, she stood up from her seat.

"Well I'm glad you are back. Oscar is almost here. I was ready to send out a search party" Nora rolled her eyes at her mothers accusations.

Ethel grimace at her daughter. Them said plainly "Put those things in the kitchen then come back here" Nora grinded her teeth together. She stormed away from her mother to the kitchen. She pushed the door

open dropped the things on the counter and walked back out.

Why did Nora have to be accused and dictated the way that she was by her mother. She loved her mother but sometimes her mothers tried to control her to much that she couldn't take it any more. Nora just wanted to be a normal girl... do what ever she wanted whenever she wanted. She thought that her mother knew that even of she didn't know it. It was quiet obvious that Nora didn't fit into the pictures. Like she was a piece to a puzzle that didn't fit into the right hole.

Sometimes Nora thought about running away and going to live with her Aunt Patricia in Chicago.

She walked around the corner to her mother. She was sitting down on the sofa again. Nora didn't want to be within and radius of her mother that she could hit her. Nora stayed at the door.

"Who was at the door?" Ethel asked quietly. She looked calm, her hands were folded on her lap, it almost scared Nora.

"You remember Jack Finn. Well he and him family are back in town" Nora talked with some confidence which was slowly dissolving in her mother spiteful look. "He was there in town and helped me get the Groceries"

"Oh... uh... Yes I heard that they were." Ethel said keeping her eyes locked on Nora. "It is good that they are back... I think"

Nora was semi- confused as to what her mother was trying to say. Was she or wasn't she glad that they were back. Nora was sure that her mother would have been ecstatic that Martha was back. They were practically sisters they had gone to elementary school together.

Then something else crossed her mind the crease in her eye brows that occurred when Nora had said Jack's name. Was it Jack that Ethel was referring to? Was she not happy that he was back?

Nora knew that she would not get any answers from her mother.

There was a knock at the door. Salvation , Nora didn't want to continue down the path that conversation was heading on.

"Please let Oscar in, show him the kitchen and where things are then go get ready"

Nora turned away from her mother, it took a lot more control then she thought to keep her self from spitting dirty words at her. Words that she had wished to say to her for along time.

But in the end they were just words.

Verbal, not physical

Chapter 5

The Socialite [4] New Moon

Nora set the china plate lightly down on the table, the gold rim sparkled in the light of the over hanging chandelier. She walked up the side of the table, and stopped when she came to the head. She rested both of her hands on the top of the leather chair, looking down the table she smiled. It was finally set, six plates, six napkins, twelve glasses, eighteen pieces of cutlery, two vases-each filled with a dozen red roses and two candle sticks.

Everything was ready.

She stood staring around the room in silence, in the kitchen, through the door behind Nora; she could

hear Oscar preparing dinner. She gripped the leather on the chair squeezing tightly looking past her hand she noticed a fork out of place she quickly righted it.

There was a loud bang at the door, and it made her jump. She could hear her mother racing down the staircase to get the door, and her father not far behind. The loud clapping sound of her mother's shoes stopped abruptly when she made it to the door. The handle clicked and the door creaked open. Nora didn't feel that her presents would be needed.

"Hello, welcome" she heard her mother greeting their guest.

"Hello, it's been so long" replied a voice, high and light, like Ethel. A women, clearly.

"Yes too long" said Edmund.

"Indeed" said another voice, deep. A man.

"Where is Nora?" asked the women

"In the dinning room, I think? Nora can you come here and greet our quests" said Ethel.

No! Nora thought to herself. She huffed, took a deep breath. Squeezed the leather once more before walking from the dinning room to the entrance hall. She came around the corner before stopping abruptly.

There in the door way was Martha Finn, Ted Gold and standing behind them on the porch eyes locked on Nora with a slight smug expression on his face was Jack. Nora's jaw fell, she forced it shut, she couldn't believe her eyes. She walked forward crossing the hall and stopping next to her father.

"Honey you remember, Martha and Ted" Edmund said gesturing towards them. Nora forced herself to look away from Jack and up to his parents. They too over the last eight years had some-what changed in appearance, Martha looked taller than she had. He face was rounder, her hair had darkened but she had the same blue eyes she shared with Jack Ted defiantly had gotten taller there were a few grays coming into is hair and his moustache. His ears had gotten bigger, but his hazel eyes still shimmered. Nora smiled, nodded and said "Yes, it's been a while".

Martha nodded in agreement. "It has. Six years I think?"

"Eight" Nora corrected

"Oh my, that long...well do you remember Jack" She gestured to Jack and he smiled at Nora, she grimaced.

"Yes." She replied sourly.

"He's eighteen, and you are?"

"Seventeen, eighteen in a month" she replied dryly.

"Oh, well, great" she smiled at Nora, and then looked up Ethel and Edmund.

"Shall we" Edmund gestured. Ted nodded "Lets". Ethel and Martha walked off to the dinning room together staying close, Ted and Edmund not far behind exchanging hand shakes. Nora watched her parents leave, and then turned to face Jack.

"Shall we" he said lightly and cheerfully. Nora fumed at him.

"Why didn't you tell that you were coming to night? Maybe I wouldn't have dreaded it like I have been and maybe I would have put one of my quainter

dresses on" she let out a breath when she'd finished. Jacks eyes widened.

"Well first of all you didn't ask-" Nora cut him off "why would I have asked what you were doing tonight you didn't say anything an....." Jack held up his hand and Nora trailed.

"You didn't let me finish" he said pressed "one- you didn't mention anything and I already thought you knew." He moved closer to her "Second- why would you dread tonight" he gestured to the dinning room where faint laughter came. "And third- you look beautiful" he turned his gaze to her, her sullen expression had changed to affectionate. She looked him up and down.

"You don't look to bad yourself" she admitted bashfully, she could feel her cheeks filling with blood, giving her away.

"But, I thought that the new principal of Columbia high school was coming for dinner?" she said. Jack looked down at the ground.

"Well..." He began to say then trailed off. Nora looked at him closely examining his expression, and the it became so clear to her, the principal was in her house. She looked away from his face staring at the timber floor.

"I thought he was a college professor" she whispered to him.

"Well the job opened up and he jumped at the opportunity, he has always wanted to be the principal there. It is his dream." He whispered back into her ear.

"Kids, why don't you join us in here?" came Edmund's voice from the dinning room, followed by another procession of laughter. Nora turned to Jack who expression was smug. She knew what he was thinking. 'Save by the bell or your father technically' she grimaced. "Shall we." he breath in her ear, he let his hand grace down her arm, and stop at her elbow, he took a firm grip on it, and yanked her forward walking with him at a brisk pace towards the dinning room. "You couldn't even tell me that you Father was the new principal" she hissed to him.

"Again, you didn't mention anything to me" he squeezed her arm, he smirked then dropped her arm.

She straightened herself out before entering the room after Jack. She thought about making a run for it, but Jack's hand caught her and yanked her through the open door.

"Don't even think about it" he whispered.

The delicious smell of roses was replaced by the thick smell of tobacco coming from her fathers cigar.

Edmund was sitting at the head of the table, Ethel was on the left sipping on a glass of wine, next to her Martha who was laughing at a joke made by Ted sitting at the opposite end of the table to Edmund, swirling a grass of scotch behind his fingers.

Jack went to sit in the chair by this father left. Holding Nora's hand, he dragged her to sit in the chair next to him. She couldn't take he eyes of him, dropping her hand he reached in front of himself for a the bottle of water

"Still, why wouldn't you say anything to me? You had the opportunity to say something." she hissed under her breath at Jack. He put the bottle down on the table leaning into her he whispered in her ear. "What's for dinner?" He laughed and smiled.

"You can't just change the subject" Nora snapped louder than necessary.

"Look I'm only going to say what you have already heard me say plenty of times; you just didn't mention anything to me" said his voice was convincing.

"All right then" Nora said "Let's talk about something else, we have the whole night. What was it like in Charleston?" She half-smiled and it reached her eyes. Jack straightened up in his seat, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Ok" he answered "Not really much to do there! For Eight years" he chuckled "It got better after a while, I made some friends"-Nora picked up her water and took a sip-"but the friends I made were never as good as that little girl-who taught me values that you can only get from a friend" he half-smiled, Nora's heart melted at his words, her hands holding the glass

edged forwards, and water started to flow out of the glass and on to Jack's lap. Jack jumped up quickly, and Nora held the glass up straight.

"Oh my dear- your pants" Ethel said." how did it happen? Do you want a fresh pair, I'm sure that Edmund won't mind lending you a pair you can just roll up the bottoms" Ethel hurried over to the door of the dining room. Jack held up his hand to Ethel and she trailed off her sentence. Jack shot a quick glance at Nora then looked back to Ethel "Ethel- don't worry yourself it was an accident. No harm done! I'll...ah... just go try a mop some of it up" he walked out of the room, his footsteps in the front room echoed until he got to the staircase then thy faded away. Ethel stood idle in the doorway, and then wandered back aimlessly to her seat. Nora floated back into her seat, facing everybody else; she stared out the window past Ethel's head. She thought about what Jack just said to her.

"But the friends I made were never as good as that little girl-who taught me values that you can only get from a friend"

Just then Jack re-appeared around the corner, dry pants and a warm expression.

"Ahh... good as new" Edmund laughed. Jack smiled back and nodded; he moved forward and sat back down in his chair. He stared at Nora; she looked down at the table and blushed.

"I'm sor-"she tried to say but Held up his hand to her and cut her off mid-sentence.

"That's fine, like you father said- as good as new-" His words were sincere, just like they had used to be. He smiled at her and she felt all her guilt vanish, if only it was always as easy as one smile to make anger and contempt disappear, if it was only that easy.

* * *

After they had all polished off their plates, they moved into the sitting room. Ted and Edmund in the two arm chairs, leaning over a box of Cuban cigars. The tobacco smoke filtered thought the room, swirling upwards to the ceiling. Martha and Ethel sat next to each other on the sofa. Jack and Nora sat together away from the rest on the cushions by the

open bay window breathing in the fresh air, talking between them not getting involved with the chit-chat.

"I'm glad to see you, you know!" Nora said quietly her knees bought up to her chest, arms wrapped tightly around them. Jack smiled; it reached his eyes and seemed to make the dull light of the room brighten.

"I've missed you." He admitted bashfully, looking down to the floor in embarrassment.

"Are you still the same?" he asked. "You know, always having to do the right thing and never having any fun. What do you do for fun anyway? Read?" he chuckled Nora thought about her answer carefully.

"Dance" she sighed.

"What?" Jack said perplexed

"That's what I do for fun. I dance" she smiled "Ballet" she added last minute. "So what do you do for fun?"

"That is easy" Jack beamed "hunting"

"Ugh, men" Nora laughed sarcastically.

"Well, actually" Jack interjected "I play the piano. When we moved to Charleston I took it up and have played every-since"

Nora nodded. There was silence between them; the only sound in the room came from their parents laughing together.

Her face screwed up she stared out of the window into the dark night sky, Jack noticed this change "What's the matter?" Jack asked curiously he shuffled closer to her, but she moved away, she sat on the edge of the bay-window seat. She looked back at him staring deep into his eyes like a never ending well, and she was searching for the bottom. "Where did you go? She choked out, her voice breaking on the last word.

"Pardon? Jack asked completely bewildered. His forehead creased, brows furrowed. "When you left Columbia. Where did you go? She said again in a firm voice, she bit down hard on her lower lip forcing the tears back.

"You know where I went." He said, smoothing out his face and replying in a cool tone "Charleston" he shrugged and moved closer to her.

"Really? Nora demanded, her breathing picking up

"Yes. Why? Jack said concerned, looking at Nora's change in mood. She was panting, her face was flushed her eyes where filling up with tears, she tried to blink them back. He extended his arm out for her; she hastily got up from the cushions, and hurried out of the room. Quickly passing her parents and their quests.

"Nora honey?" Ethel said. But she ignored her. Jack quickly got up and followed her; she quickly walked through the dinning room. To the large glass doors on the other side of the table, she drew them open, and the gush of wind that came through the door-way it pushed her hair off her face and made the chandelier twinkle. She stepped out on to the terrace. The crisp air on the night gave her goose-bumps, the wrapped her arms around her self, the wind made her eyes water, but she never broke stride.

"Nora!" Jack called after her. She walked down the stairs, to the courtyard and the pitter-patter of her footsteps where replaced with a soft crunching. The light from the house started to slip away, and soon she was walking in the dark, along the path through the courtyard.

"Nora stop." Jack said hastily, trying to keep up with her. She slowed as she came to a large oak, at the end of the garden; hanging off one of the higher- thicker braches was a chair-swing. It creaked as the wind slowly rocked it, Nora turned and sat down she pulled her knees up until they touched her chest, she wrapped hers arms around tightly, she watched Jack close the distance between them. He stood a few feet away from the swing, Nora briefly smiled at him. Jack hesitated then sat down next to Nora. The swing dipped with the added pressure, Nora could feel the heat radiating off his body. She looked away from his face, to the house the lights shiny brightly but quiet reaching her face.

"What was that about?" Jack demanded. Looking at Nora she could here the skips of his breathing that

echoed in his voice giving it a mean edge. Nora didn't look into his eyes, to scared to face him, but kept briefly looking back at his face for reassurance to give her courage.

"My mother told me that you moved to Chicago, and that you were most likely not coming back." Nora cringed, her forehead creased and her brows furrowed "Huh" she huffed "I wonder why she said that to me, why she'd do that to me" she could feel the tear bulging in her eyelids. She bit her tongue to stop them from flowing over

"For along time I thought that I was the reason you left." She admitted now looking into his eyes, not seeking courage but comfort.

"Why would you think that? Jack looked puzzled his face was smoothed, he shuffled closer. And took her face with both of his hands "why?" he breathed. Nora looked away from his; his hands slowly fell from her face. She said in a weak voice "Because of what I had said to you the last time we were at the lake. Jack you have to know that, if I knew what I was going to say to you was going to have the result it did. I never

would have said anything. And everyday for an entire year, I regretted saying that to you." She tried blinking back the fresh wave of tears that rose in her eyes but one escaped and ran down her cheek. He lifted his hand extending his index finger and wiped the tear from her cheek, the heat had left his body and his finger was cold it made the hair on the back of her neck stand up

"I forgive you now-" he sighed but couldn't finish his sentence- Nora cut him off "And then one day I woke up, and it was like I was waking up for the first time. None of it ever happened. I never thought about it because it never crossed my mind. But on the odd occasion that I did, the thought about it was almost like it wasn't real that it was just a dream or past life. The thoughts made my fell warm like the air always did, and I could smell the wild daises as if I was standing right in front them, but then there were images of a boy hugging me closely, I could smell his hair and feel his heart beat under my body as if I was holding him myself. But then I thought that in this world, nothing like that could possible exist. Something that made me happy, fell good and give

my life meaning could never be there. Like a mirage in the desert." She buried her head in her knees and the tears began to flow; salt water ran down her cheeks and stained her dress. Jack wrapped his arm around her and dragged her up to his chest. He kissed her hair and sighed "It's not your fault" he hugged her closer, and kissed her hair. He sobs drowned out every other sound around them.

"It happened." He breathed into her hair "Everything happened; it's wasn't a dream or fantasy it actually happen."

Nora lifted her head, and looking to Jack who was now cradling her in his arms. She was shivering. He held her tightly and slightly rocked her. She rested her head against his chest.

"Why do you think so much that this isn't real? You have no faith." Jack said, he pressed his check against her hair.

"Don't you realize now" Nora said in a hard voice "I still think that this isn't happening, because for so long I didn't believe that it ever happened"

Jack kissed her hair again. "It happened! I'm real and I'm here." she lifted her head to look into his eyes they were warm. He sighed "Accept it" and smiled

"I do. I know that now. You came back. To me" she smiled back at him; jack Nodded in agreement.

He had come back for her.

Jack wiped one last tear that was sitting on the tip of her chin. Her face was blotchy from the salt water, her eyes red and puffy. She laid her head back on his chest she moved her hand up and down drawing line of his chest. Jack moved his fingers through her hair. He shifted his weight, laying back on the swing he laid his head down on the arm. Nora shifted her weight to match his.

"Don't the stars look beautiful tonight. I feel I haven't really seen them in a while" Jack admitted, Nora's forehead creased "What do you mean?" she asked hastily.

"Well..." Jack said "The lights were to bright in Charleston. But, here they aren't and I can see them now." he looked up into the abyss of the dark night

sky, with lights only radiating from the tiny dots coming form it. It was darker than another night. A new moon Nora sighed, and thought that it was a sign, a good one. The mood in the air had shifted, from doubt to change. A new change.

"The stars here aren't as good as Lake Wylie. There are no lights there at all." Nora interjected.

"If I could wish for anything." Jack sighed "I wish to be a star. Because they last forever... then, I could love you forever". Nora was shocked at what he said, she whished for the same thing. "Maybe your wish will come true" she said, she turned her head to look at him he was smiling at her. She found his hand and grasped it she bought it down her head; she softly pressed her lips against his hand, then let it go again.

"What do whish for? I mean... if you could have anything in the world what it would be?" Jack sighed

"My aspirations are almost the same as yours. I wish to be with you forever."

Jack rested his hand too her cheek and left it there.

"I never forgot about you Nora" Jack admitted quickly "You were always on my mind."

Nora breathed "But I forgot about you...and now all my feelings for you from before have suddenly come back to me and I love you the same as I did ten years ago. How come I forgot you" she repeated, she squeezed her eyes together. His hand stroked her cheek gently.

"Maybe because you chose not to think about it"

Nora didn't like that thought she had a different idea about it. "Maybe someone chose for me" she cocked

"If so" Jack breathed "That was then-this is now! We have all the time in the world and the rest of our lives"

She reached for his hand at her cheek and found it she held it their scars in sync with each other.

"It really is you, that scar is all the proof I need. I don't want to go to sleep tonight. how do I know if I wake up in the morning and you aren't here"

"You don't that's why they call it tomorrow"

"What do I do if are you gone?" Nora's voice was shaking.

"You remember me" Jack said plainly

Nora sighed "I hope that I can do that"

"I know you can" there was a smile in Jacks voice.

His words made Nora think about the new moon... there was a new beginning for both of them and whatever was going to happen in the future, they would face it together. To help the other get back up if they fell. There was a sense of change. Nora knew it, and it was the new moon.

Chapter 6

The Socialite [5] Pianissimo

"æ% Chapter Five æ%"

Pianissimo

The early morning sun was low and the dull blue sky was lined with orange clouds. Nora slowly rolled out of her bed moaning from sleep deprivation. She slid into her slippers they were cold and rough on her feet, scuffing across her floor she walked to her closet, swinging the door open, it hit the wall with a loud bang.

"Nora is that you? What are you doing up there?" came Ethel's echoing voice from the entrance hall.

"Yes mom... I'm up" Nora's voice was dry, she began to search through her closet trying to find something to wear today.

It was the first day back at school and Nora was both exited and nervous about it. She was meeting him at his house and was going to walk to school with him. He must be just as nervous as her, it was his first day at a new school.

At least he would have one friend.

Nora picked an outfit that she liked it very much, it wasn't a special outfit, but it wasn't and everyday dress either. She pinned her tight curls and was ready to go down stairs.

Why was she going to this much trouble for school? After all it was just school, there was nothing special about it. Or was there? Was the reason Jack?

Of course it was, Jack, Jack, Jack.

She pushed through the doors of the dinning room, Ethel sat on the opposite side of the door with a tea cup in her hand, and a half-eaten piece of toast.

"Morning" she said plainly "Ready for school?"

"Spring break goes too fast" Nora said in a flat voice, walking foreword she slumped in the chair across from her mother.

"Don't you look nice" Ethel said, putting her teacup down on the saucer then folding her hands together on the table top.

Nora shrugged, looking at the food spread across the table she deiced on a piece of toast, it was cold but she didn't care.

"I'll be home at four" she said, standing up from the table with her piece of toast still in her hands she headed from the door.

"Have a nice day" Ethel said jokingly

Nora turned around and replied "I will"

The halls of Columbia high school were crowded with people hurrying around, excited with the beginning of school. The noise of a thousand voices talking at once was just a hum in the back of Nora's mind.

Walking next to Jack, Nora noticed that everybody was staring at her. What gossip this would make, Nora Greenhill with the new boy.

Nora tried to ignore there dictating glares, but couldn't block out their faces. All wearing the same blank expression, with the same curiousness in their eyes.

They walked to the door of their English class a slender girl pushed her way through the door, she ignored Nora and continued to walk to her seat in the second row next her black haired friend.

"Ready?" Nora asked

Jack nodded, took a deep breath then walked into the classroom. Stopping by the teachers desk, "Wait a minute" Mrs. Harlem said blandly, she finished writing the looked up "Hello?" she said, pushing her glasses further up her nose.

"Hello I'm Jack Finn an-"

"Oh yes the new principals son" She said, cutting him off, everybody was excited about the new principal, and his son that would be attending.

Jack walked away without another word to find a seat. Nora sat behind him, to her dismay her seat was next to Benjamin.

"Nora" he said in his usual over confident voice.

She turned her body away from him.

"Oh come on, don't be like that. You know I wouldn't done anything to him"

"Really?" she retorted "It surely didn't seem that way to me!"

"I hope that you had a great spring break" Said Mrs. Harlem, starting the class, she leaned against her desk and Nora was thankful, she didn't want to talk to Benjamin any longer "I also hope that you have completed your holiday homework..."

The door to the classroom flew open hitting the wall with a loud bang, Georgia and Lillian Webb entered the room laughing they pushed their way through the isles to their chairs at the back of the room.

Continuing to laugh they sat down in their chair and began talking with other students. Suddenly the

classroom erupted with noise, as people talked and laughed.

Nora studied Mrs. Harlem's expression as it changed from, calm and collected to annoyed and angry.

"Quiet" Mrs. Harlem shouted, the room became quiet and all attention was on her "You people are senior, by now you should know how to behave in a classroom. How are you going to cope in life if you don't listen. You get a job"

"We already have money" called Lillian, sharing some more laughs with Georgia.

Mrs. Harlem moved across the room to her "And what will happen if your parents die or you get cut off from your money, you'll all need jobs, if you can't pay attention then you have no chance in this world" moving back down the class room, she said in an evil tone "This shouldn't be taken lightly, pull your head in. Spring break is over!"

The rest of the class went by in a heavy silence. Mrs. Harlem went through the new reading list.

Highlighting the books that would require a essay on when completed.

In History Nora looked out the window blocking out the hum of Mr. Pertal's voice as he droned on about the black plague, while Jack sat straight in his chair listening with deep fascination.

During lunch Nora introduced Jack to her friends, Victoria Hobart, a short blond-haired girl with big blue eyes, Sophie Hallett, black hair and blue eyes. Nicole march who was the tallest out of everybody and had long blond hair, and Nora's best friend Fern Daw who's silver blond hair was the longest.

The last people she introduced him to was Luke McLean, a tall boy with light blond curly hair, and Matthew Armstrong, a slightly shorter boy with short dark brown hair. Jack remembered these boy from when he used to live in Columbia and was glad that they remembered him.

Nora and jack walked home together.

"I think your dad will be a great principal. Everybody loves him already" Nora said with a smile

"Nora...Ted isn't my real dad" Jack said plainly, not looking at her.

Nora didn't know what to say, and as the seconds stretched on she realized that she had to say something, anything.

"Oh..."

"I never knew my real dad...he left my mom and I when I was still a baby."

"Oh so sorry...do you know what happened to him?" It was the right question to ask, but Nora had said it without thinking.

"Uh...no" Jack didn't seem to mind to the questions "but every year on my birthday I get a letter from my dad, and fifty dollars" he said, with no change in expression.

"Oh...do you get anymore letters?"

Jack didn't want to say anything, but he did anyway "No, only one, once a year."

"And, you don't now where he is? Have you ever tried to contact him?" Nora turned the corner with Jack, and waited for a car to pass before they could cross.

"No...there is never a return address on his letters, besides a state initial and F. Cripps" he said as they crossed the street and continued to walked down the sidewalk.

"Do you know what the 'F' stands for?" Nora continued with her questions.

"Uh yes, Fred. Fred Cripps. From what I know he moves around a lot too"

"Why do you think that?" she asked curiously.

"Most years there is a different state initial on the letters. IA, MD, CT, and LA"

"He was Louisiana" Nora said

Jack nodded "Yes. He's in New York now though"

Nora pressed "Do you know much about more about him?"

Jack was hesitant, but he answered "Well uh.... He's forty-three, he lives in New York and he um... has a wife and child" pain shot across his face.

"Oh..." Nora said quietly.

"Yes well, her name is Barbra and together they have nine-year-old son Alan, so I have a nine-year-old, half brother somewhere in New York." There was in slight sense of happiness in his voice.

"Is your mom angry about that?" Nora asked, stopping on the sidewalk.

Jack stopped with her, he shrugged "Not really. After my dad left, we were on our own for a while but half-a-year later my mum met Ted and married him eight months later... he's practically raised me. I love him as much as my own dad and I'm proud to call him 'dad' "

"Do you think your dad doesn't want to be found?" Nora asked not wanting it to sound to forward.

"If he wanted to be found then he would go to so much trouble to stay hidden" Jack shrugged,

"Would you like to meet him?" Nora said softly.

"I think I would... I think I'd like to know how much I am like him. My mum says that I look a lot like him, the blond hair and green eye." He made a joke at himself only have one green eye and one blue.

"I'm so sorry" Nora said quietly.

"It's not so bad. I didn't really know him... I mean I was too young"

"Sometimes I wish that I could have been adopted" Nora said with out of her own will.

"Nora that isn't something that you would want to wish for" Jack snapped "you have parents who love you, and have given you everything. You should be pleased with what you have"

"I love Ted he has raised me...but part of me still feel incomplete without my real dad" they stopped in front of Jack's house, he looked away from her up to his house. "Do you want to come in?" he asked quietly

"Sure"

They walked up to the door together, Nora hadn't been inside his house yet.

The door swung open with grace, creaking not once, and shuttering to a perfect stop. Nora looked inside to see Jacks home.

It was modeled the same as hers, beautiful décor, modern future. She walked through to the sitting room, it was almost identical to hers expect for the grand piano sitting in the corner near the window.

"This is so beautiful" Nora sighed.

"What?" Jack asked "The piano? Or you?" he laughed mockingly, Nora grimaced.

"The piano....its lovely"

Jack smiled "My mom and Ted bought this for me for my tenth birthday"

"I can't really stay too long" Nora blurted out

"Why" Jack said disappointed

Moving over to the piano, she stroked her fingers across the top "I have ballet at four-thirty"

"Well that's alright it's..." Jack looked at his gold "Five-to-four" he cringed at his watch. "Well then since I won't be joining you...I think that you should give me a little preview" he smirked, sitting down at the piano.

"What?" Nora said sharply

He smiled a crooked smile "Come on, show me some ballet moves"

"Are you kidding?" Nora laughed once.

He raised on eye brow, moving his fingers of the keys, playing a soft tune "Dose it look like I'm kidding? come on..."

"There is no bar. What am I going to do?"

Jack's smile grew bigger "Use the chair by the fire place" he gestured to a chair that was sitting near the fireplace.

Nora huffed and pulled the chair next to the piano, kicking her shoes off they landed with a light thud on the ground.

She took a deep breath-"You owe me Finn!" she said, lightly placing her right hand on the top of the chair.

Jack laughed "I promise you'll get your revenge one day! Any special requests?"

"Do you know Claire de Lune?"

Jack slowly bought his song to the end, then started Claire de Lune. She squeezed the top of the chair then turned her feet out into first position. She waited until the right moment in the song to start.

Five, six ,seven ,eight. One, two three, four, she counted in her head

Nora started with demi plié, then a grand plié, slowly continuing this through the five positions.

Nora turned her self away from Jack to do her next exercise, it was an elev(, a rise onto the balls of her feet, but Nora didn't have her point shoes on and found it slightly difficult, but she managed.

Jack watched in deep fascination, he had never seen anything so beautiful, so graceful.

That night, Nora returned to her home, got ready for ballet leaving shortly after.

Jack moved into his bedroom after that, lying on his bed thinking over everything. He had an urge inside of him to kiss her, but he had missed his chance when it was there.

Next time- if there would ever be a next time. He was sure that he would kiss her. He would make sure of it.

He turned his head to look out of his bedroom window the moon outside was shining brightly high in the centre of the sky. It was as beautiful as Nora, it reminded him of her. He was gui $&<>@zc

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Chapter 7

The Socialite [6] Deliberation

Chapter Six Deliberation

AS THE MONTHS WENT BY Jack still was not been able to show his indescribable affection towards Nora. It welled inside of him every day that he saw her show up on his door step in the mornings to walk to school with him. Sitting next to her in everyone of his classes. He wished that he could grab her and kiss and hope that she would kiss him back with the same amount of love that he love her with. He wished that he could tell her how much he loved her, but he was too afraid of what she might say if he did. Would she say yes because she felt the same and was waiting for this moment her whole life? Or would she say no

because she didn't think about him that way, and that she would think it would be best if they stayed friends because that would be to weird for her? Jack wasn't sure about either one of those and certainly didn't want think about it too much. He was sure that if he thought about it too much that it would damage his ego to the point of un-reparable. He would have to start think a little bit less about Nora and more about his school work. He was an honour student with the same test scores as Nora -only because he made sure that they studied for their every test together-. The future in front of him was glowing very brightly but he couldn't see that at all. All he could see in his future was Nora. It was now June and school was almost finished for the year- For the other students it meant that summer was coming and they wouldn't not have to return for a little while. But that mean for Nora and Jack they would have to leave high school. They were now Eighteen- soon to turn nineteen. Graduation was in four weeks, and when the time came they would put on their black robes, with the deep marron stashes- yellow for Jack, as he was the valedictorian of their class- Together

with their peers, friends and family members watching them they would stand up on the podium and receive their scrolls telling them that they have graduated from high school. They would have to go to college, partly because they wanted to but mostly because their parents wanted them too. At least... that was the case for Nora. Her mother was excited that she was going to Sarah Lawrence College in New York. Together they had been talking about going there since Nora was nine and the school was first established in nineteen-twenty-six. Her mother would constantly bring up at the dinner table facts about the schools extra-curricular and curricular activities. Ethel would continuously brag about how her daughter would be attending the best girl's school in the country. Jack was offered a three year scholar ship to Dartmouth in New Hampshire. Which he casually declined- And accepted his offer to the University of South Carolina.-After he found out he could only think about the sacrifice that his step father Ted would have to make trying to find a new job and a new house. They were happy in Columbia, his step-father was happy at work. He loved his job, it

was a good job- the principal of Columbia high school. Had had always wanted to work there. And he didn't want to tear his mother away from her best friend in the whole world, Ethel. Jack didn't want to be the reason why his family was unhappy. But the biggest reason of all would have to be that he didn't want to be away from Nora. Which was stupid of its own, because she would be in New York. Her and her mother. So then Martha wouldn't have Ethel anyway maybe if he applied to NYU. Would they take late acceptances. But then he and his family would have to move New York. His dad may not be able to find a job or a home. But then his mother would have Ethel. Jack felt in the middle and in control of his parent's happiness and financial problems. No matter what he choose, there would always be something that made the situation bad. Jack was surprised that on the day of his eighteenth birthday a few weeks ago, instead of getting a letter and fifty dollars from his biological father. He got a visit... his father had come down to Columbia and stayed with Jack during the week of his birthday. Jack had finally gotten to know the father that he never got to know, in the short

time the he was in his life. He learnt everything that he wanted to know, and know he promised to write his return address on his letters. Also promising to send more during the year, as well as telling him to come a visit him and meet his wife and half brother in New York. He didn't stay for any longer than the week. He left the morning after his birthday, but assured him that he would visit soon. The only thing that Jack wasn't quite sure of was if his dad would stick to his word... but he had a strong feeling.

* * *

"I don't really want to go. My mom has been talking about it since I was nine...and at first it sounded great. But I just don't seem too interested now anyway" Nora said to Jack as they left the high school one day when school had finished.

"What do you want to do then...? Nora you can't hold of sending your application. If you leave it too late then they won't accept you and you wont get in then what are you going to do?" Jack retorted, he didn't like siding with Ethel in fact he was quiet scared of her most of the time but she did have a point. That

morning she had made it clear that Nora's college applications had arrived, and that she should start writing them as soon as she got home that night after school. Nora had been contemplating all day whether she should actually apply for Sarah Lawrence or not. She didn't want to go, because her heart was in the academic world any more Nora didn't take much pride in her straight A's, as she used too. But would she do the right by her mother or for the first time in a long time would she do what she wanted to do. She had already wasted thirteen years of her life in school and she really did not want to have to spend another three year in a futility that would keep her away from her home...and Jack. If he was staying she wanted to do all she could with her power to stay in Columbia. The University of South Carolina was like a sister school to Columbia high school...and luck had been on Nora side. She had walked into the school administration building during lunch time and her eye caught sight of applications to the University of South Carolina. She took one and planned to apply without Jack knowing, but she had dropped her book in the hall way on her way out of the school earlier

and Jack had found the application when he helped her pick her books. Nora confessed straight away, she had not been able to come up with a reasonable explanation, and she had never been a good liar. "I know but I would rather stay here... like you. With you. Wouldn't that be better anyway?" Nora tried to defend herself, and present a point that Jack would not be able to argue against but he found a way too in the end. "I didn't have much of a choice-" Jack was cut off by Nora talking in response "Yes you did. The offer was there, but you didn't except it...." Jack held up his hand to Nora, and she quietly trailed off her sentence. "Let me finish first" Jack continued on "I didn't have much of a choice because my life and everything I live for is here. Everything. Not just the things that matter to me but the things that matter to my family. My dad would have had to look for a new job and house. My mother wouldn't have had any friends, she would have to make new friends. So before the offer came to me I was already ready to turn it down." Nora didn't like that he had such a valid point. She hated it when he was right and there was nothing to argue against him. "I just... don't want

to go. Besides I have already done thirteen years of school how is another three going to make a difference" Nora said. If she didn't want to go to college at all that would not be so bad she could work at the ballet school. She would be, making good money and it is for doing something that she loved. "Nora you have to go. College sets you up for life. I know that so many people think that you have to start thinking about your future and what you want to do before you leave" "I know what I want to do." Nora mumbled under breath, but Jack was still able to hear her. "Nora I know that you love ballet. It is who you are...but it can't take you the places that the right education can." Jack side her didn't like arguing against her but he did want what was best for her like her mother did though he didn't like Ethel. "That isn't fair you get to play piano if you want too. Why can't I do ballet" Nora moaned "You know why, as much as it kills me to say there isn't much of a future in it." "People get paid a lot of money to perform, ballet takes you places" Nora said stopping on the sidewalk waiting for a car to pass. "You know that in the early fifteenth and sixteenth centuries only men

were allowed to act." Jack said with a smile in his voice. He had done his ballet research. Nora was please that he knew this but found it annoying that he used history against her."I don't have a real problem with you doing it" he went on " it's your mother who dose" Jack said as they crossed the road quickly next to each other. "I know and its driving me crazy. Honestly does it matter what I do for my job if I do have one. As long as I'm happy isn't that all that should count" Jack sighed "Nora you and I both know that you could be the queen but that won't help because your mother would still feel the same about women who work." Nora muttered under breath"I don't really care what she thinks" her words were sincere with disgust. "I know, but she is your mother, she carried you and raised you. You should respect her wishes" Jack did make another annoying point "stupid wishes" Nora muttered under her breath again, Jack herd her and breathed a laugh. They turned the corner onto their street and began to walk, they weren't heading for Nora's house not Jack either. But they would keep walking until they had finished their conversation. Both of their head's

briefly looked up at Jacks house as they passed. "Just think ...you'll get to go to New York, you'll get to live in New York" Jack said changing the subject and trying to think of something else to say. His house reminded him of something that he had thought of earlier "Yeah live" Nora said flatly "Inside a psychotic institute" She smiled at own remark. Jack tried to think of something that he could elaborate on. "Think about everything that you'll see" "Sure I'll see a lot being confined within the walls of a psychotic institute " Nora said keeping her down. "Good god" Jack moaned, he rolled his eyes "you won't think about anything else but the bad things" Looked up at him and beamed "Nope of course not!" she said in a voice that was all sarcastic and not one bit sincere "Fine then think about how good an education you will be getting" Jack said taking her fake-happiness to heart. Using it against her. "Yes I know world class education. God, I am only doing it for my parents" Nora complained her fake- happiness was at an end "Well that's nice" Jack said mimicking Nora Nora sighed taking in a deep breath the light-after noon air stabbed her in the throat, she was not faking her

pain though it wasn't the type of pain that matched what they were talking about"I don't really care about going" "you don't have to like it" Jack said honestly. "Of course I do if I don't like something then it make everything more hard to endure."Jack knew that what she was saying was the truth."Okay, okay let's talk about the good things then." Nora said quickly Jack snorted "Are you past all the negatives?" "Yes." Nora said "Really?" Jack raised both of his light brows "Positive" Nora insisted, she was in need to quickly change the subject she didn't want to talk any more about Sarah Lawrence. She wasn't going, she knew that as soon she got home she would start her application. Even if Jack didn't approve, he didn't have. She didn't have to tell him everything, it wasn't his choice. He wasn't even suppose to find out any way. He was just sticking his nose in. And her mother didn't really need to know anyway. She would have to tell her and talk to her about it, which she wasn't exactly looking forward too. She knew that it was coming shed just was prepared. But if she disagreed like Jack she would still take her chances and send in the application anyway. "fine." Jack said quietly as he

looked away from her to see her house "I don't really have anything else to say" he had lost he knew what she was thinking she was easy to read like a book. Her eyes were looking directly in front of her, she eye were slightly squinted but the sun was hidden behind the houses on the other side if the street, and her lips were pulled down at the edges. Over the years he had paid more than enough attention to know when she was lying to him. But it was a lot easier than that, Nora had never been a good liar to anybody. "You know that I'm not going. No matter what you say, I'm not going" she knew that he knew. It was no use trying to lie. She gave a and told him. "I know" Jack said hiding his victory inside of him. He was a much more convincing liar "I tried my best" "Fine then" Nora couldn't distinguish if he was lying or not. It confused Nora "Now all I have to do is tell my mom" "Good luck. You'll need all the help that you can get" Jack said out of complete sincerity "Thank-you" she said quietly. They were in the middle of the street, half way between her house and his. "Your welcome..." Jack said smiling at her then turning and walking away. Nora stood silently looking at his back

slowly walking away from her increasing the distance between them. Then she finally turned and continued to walk to her house. She focused mostly on what she was going to say to her mother exactly how she would tell. She prayed that the out come she could only wish for would somehow come true. But she knew that it would never happen.

The door to her house was open a fraction as Nora came up the side path, she saw the leg of a dinning room chair sticking out of the door. Nora rolled her eyes and let herself in the house closing the door all the way leaving the chair sitting by the door.

"Nora?" she herd her mother call from the sitting room. "Is that you?" she asked. Who else could it have been, her father was in Chicago visiting his sister. "Yes mom its me" Nora walked across the entrance hall trying as hard as she could not to make her shoes echo. She hesitated by the door of the sitting room before she entered. The window was open and a light breeze was coming in through the window not strong enough to move the curtains completely but to only make them ripple slightly. Ethel was sitting on

an arm chair facing the stone fire place. Suddenly the application felt a hundred pounds, she may as well have been holding a brick in her hand. Ethel turned around in her chair and instantly spotted the application in her hang. It may have been glowing brightly. Ethel's eyes zeroed in on the application in her hand, her eyes squinted and wondered what was in her hand. "What do you have there?" She asked standing up out of her chair walking forward to Nora, her hand outstretched, directed at the application that Nora was squeezing it so tightly that the paper creased the shapes of her finger tips. Pulling the application out of the way of her mothers hands up to her chest "It is a college application" Nora breathed. "What do you mean application? For Sarah Lawrence? That came this morning" Ethel laughed out of confusion. Nora's breathing accelerated "No. its not for Sarah Lawrence" "Now I very confused " Ethel's brows furrowed. "I'm... not going to Sarah Lawrence." Nora confessed walking out through the sitting room. Ethel high on her heels through the sitting room into the dinning room. The Sarah Lawrence application at the end of the dinning

room table with a black fountain pen sitting on top of it. Ethel fumed "What?' Nora said nothing. The second went by and Nora knew that she had to say something. "Me, I'm not going... to Sarah Lawrence" She stuttered then finally go the words out of her mouth "I want to go to the university of South Carolina. With Jack. Me and him are going to go together." Ethel's eyes widened. "Why? Where did this come from?" she hadn't had enough time to fully process what he daughter had just told her. "I don't know" Nora shrugged "I saw the application and I just had this idea" "I don't believe this Nora what are you saying. You want to give up your future based on an idea... this is crazy" Ethel was shocked by her sudden decisions she had no idea what had bought this one, but several possibilities ran through her head. "Mom what is so bad about all of this. If I go there then we don't have to move to New York." Nora paused for a brief second working up the courage in her lungs to speak what she had prepared "Dad wont need to get a new job, and you wont have to make any new friends..." Nora trailed off her sentence that had came out of her mouth nothing like she had

planned. "Nora I can't allow this" Ethel said flatly. Nora moaned "Mom, Jack turned down Dartmouth because of the sacrifice that he and his family would have to make. Why can't I do the same?" "Because I'm not allowing this" Ethel said plainly with no hesitation. "I am in the same situation as him what is the difference?" Ethel half rolled her eyes then said "Only the fact at he made the decision, and in your case you are not." she picked up the application with her hand-the pen rolling off the application on to the table top- and held it out to Nora. She stared "That is not fair at all" Nora's voice cracked "I have no choice over anything" Ethel laughed "That is not true." She started to little shake it, making it ripple slightly. "Of course it is." Nora said ripping the application from Ethel's hand " I have never asked you for anything in my life, but I'm asking you for this", with a swift jerk of her wrist Nora tossed the application out of her hand it hit the wall by the doors then went still then fell too the ground, and landed by the open doors of the dinning room. Ethel and Nora stared at it for a few short moments. "I'm sorry but I can't grant you this Nora" for a second Nora thought that her mother

was sincere, she turned her had back to look at her mother whom was still looking at the application on the floor. But there was no sign of forgiveness in her eyes. Nora knew her mother to well to know when she was being lied too. "I can't believe that the one time I open my mouth to ask you for something. You deny me of it" there was a lump in her throat it at the top, it was hurting her, but she bit down hard on her tongue to keep the tears back. "I'm sorry" Ethel said quietly. "I don't want your apology. I just want this, just this once. I'll never ask you for anything else as long as I live" Nora said coldly her eyes scowled at her mother. There were several expressions that flashed across her face. Disappointment. Relive. Happiness. Disappointment again "It's him, isn't it." Ethel whispered so low that Nora almost didn't hear her "That is why you want this so badly..." "What mom?" Nora demanded "He is the reason why you are doing all of this, why you are willing to give all of this up. Isn't he?" "What no!" Nora was sure what her mother was talking about but from what she had herd she was sure that she was talking about Jack. "You love him don't you" Ethel turned and faced

Nora. Her face held a smug expression with a small hint of pity. "I...uh..." Nora knew that even if she tried to lie she would be caught. It was no use even trying "he doesn't know" she said quietly looking down at the ground "I knew it," Ethel screeched with victory "he has been filling your head with dreams" she quickly got over her childish succeed and hissed her last words at Nora. "What really dose matter about that, he is a friend... my best friend" Nora said taking a few steps away from her mother, then lifting her had to look her in the eye "god without him I don't know what I would do..." "Yes he has been such a great friend to you, but he is telling you what to do... and I don't like it" Ethel's words crushed Nora. She felt like someone had stepped on her heart and there was no oxygen left. She took in a deep breath but found no relive to the action. She was mortified by her mother. "Well I don't care what you think..." she spat her mother. Nothing had gone the way that she had planned, her mother didn't show the support that she had hoped for, but she knew that she had to lie, just so she could no get what she wanted so much. Her mom might not believe her but it was

worth a shot"Mom...I have behaved so inadequately" She tried to word it as delicately as she could have, she tried to avoid looking at her mother, she knew that her eyes would give her away. And she tried to keep her voice quiet, slow, and calm " I can see that my outburst was uncalled for, childish, and immature... I'm sorry" Nora was so impressed with her job that she had herself convinced. She took a quick look at her mother then looked away when she made sight with her eyes trying to disguise it to seem like she was just looking around the room. "Darling I know what is best for you, and I think that for once you can make your own decision" Ethel replied in a soothing toned voice that Nora wasn't sure about, but it seemed to have reassured her. Ethel had bought it? She had believed Nora- whom was the worst liar out of anybody she knew. "Wha?" was the only sound that her mouth was able to produce. "Honey...if you want to go to the university then there is nothing that I can do to stop you" Ethel shrugged, her brows lifting higher above her eyes, her mouth pulling into a straight line curving at the edges. Was too happy to realise what she was saying "Oh...my god" "Honey

don't use the lords name in vain" Ethel quickly snapped viscously at her, then return to her happy state. "Sorry" Nora said "thank-you" she whispered pulling her lips into a half smile, she walking slowly forward towards her mother. She gave Ethel an awkward one armed hug. Then she turned and walked out of the room holding the application tightly in her hands. Ethel stood staring aimlessly at the wall next to the door which Nora had just exited through. Ethel hand never been much of a liar but she was so pleased with what she had just done that she had convinced herself. She listened closely as Nora stood steps changed from echoing on the timber floors to ascending up the staircase on the carpet. Then she finally heard what she had wanted to hear Nora close her bedroom door. Ethel walked over to the application, now laying face down on the carpet. She picked in up and walked back to the end of the dinning room table. She sat down in the chair, feeling her own pressure increase the stair on the seat. She picked up the fountain pen. Ethel felt no hesitation, she had prepared herself for this outcome long before it happen. She did not feel guilty in any

way for what she was about to do. She though that it was her right, he responsibility. If Nora wasn't going to do this then she was sure that she was. She had given Nora the opportunity that she had past. Now Ethel was going to this she would be taking Nora happiness from her by force. Using the intuition that only comes with being a mother. She though that she was doing the right thing for Nora, but was she really? She pressed the pen down on the paper and wrote: Nora Katherine Ann Greenhill.

Chapter 8

The Socialite [7] Wishes

CHAPTER SEVEN

WISHES

NORA ONLY HAD TO WAIT two weeks until she herd from the University of South Carolina and to her surprise she was excepted with high honors to the University, she couldn't be happier. She would get to stay in Columbia, she wouldn't have to move. Nothing had to changed, everything could stay the same, perfect as it is. She would stay in Columbia with Jack.

Since the day she had gotten her letter of acceptance, she had read it so much that she knew it word for word;

Dear Miss Greenhill,

I am delighted to inform you that the faculty has voted to offer you a place in the alumni in the University of South Carolina class of 1944. Following an old University tradition the admission is enclosed, please accept personal congratulations for your outstanding achievements.

You have before you a tremendous opportunity, an education at the University means attending classes taught by professor who care about your success. Living on a beautiful campus with amenities and accommodation, and being a part of a student body with tremendous spirit and pride. It also means getting the preparation and the professional training you need for a better career, bigger rewards and a brighter future.

We need to know by late June whether or not you plane to accept our offer of admission. If you are to accept admission to attend for this coming

September, further information will be sent to you by a member of the Freshmen Dean's Office.

I very much hope that you will decide to join us at the University of South Carolina. We have a statement about the University's opportunities which may be helpful to you in making your college choice. Whatever you decision may be, you have my best wishes for every future success

Sincerely

Dean of Freshmen's office

William. R. Fitzsimmons

Nora was so absorbed in her acceptance to the University that she was completely unaware about her mothers plans, nor was she aware that she had also been excepted to Sarah Lawrence. Ethel was pleased with her job with the application. She hadn't written one in many years and was not surprised to see that they hadn't changed much.

As soon as Nora had gotten her expectance letter to the University. Ethel immediately started to think up ways to get Nora to New York.

One that she though of and elaborated on to the extent that she actually put into action. Ethel thought that is she was excepted- the academy is in New York- then she would be going to New York. That is half way to Sarah Lawrence she would be in the same state. But then she would be spending all of her time doing Ballet, and that would just annoy Ethel more.

Instead of the people coming and Nora being excepted Ethel thought that if the people from the academy didn't come to her performance then she wouldn't be excepted at all. Nora would be depressed with ballet and not want to do it anymore than she wouldn't want to stay in Columbia then Ethel would tell her about Sarah Lawrence and then she will want to go. Nora wouldn't be doing ballet and she wouldn't be with Jack.

Tonight was Nora's concert, in a couple of hours Nora would have to get up on stage and perform for hundreds of people. Not just her family and friends but two people from the American Ballet Academy whom were coming to watch her perform and see if their would be a place available for her at their

academy. Nora spent the whole day with Jack shaking dreading the night time which came too quickly, then usual. Nora felt that time was against her, it annoyed her so much that she was actually considering hiding in her closet which Jack had convinced her otherwise already and might have to do again.

Jack sat on her bed watching her put her hair up into a tight bun, she put pin after pin in her hair until she was sure that it was stable enough to not fall out.

There was a knock at the door, Jack jumped off the bed, and ran to the closet.

Nora turned around .“Who‘s there?”

“It‘s me.” Ethel said from the other side of the door “Are you almost ready? we have to leave soon” there was a creaking sound, as she began to turn the door handle, Jack closed the closet door.

“I‘m almost ready mom, don‘t come in. I‘m… I’m still getting changed I’ll be down in a minute” Nora’s voice cracked on the last word.

“Okay” Ethel said.

When she herd her Ethel's door close Nora let out a big breath of air that she was holding in.

Jack came out of the closet, "How am I going to get out of the house without being seen" He said walking over to Nora, her gaze was directed at the window.

"The window?" He asked nervously.

"What?" Nora asked smugly "You scared?" .

"Yes" Jack admitted "Nora there are some things that I'll do for you...this isn't one of them" Jack shook his head from side to side.

Nora raised her brow "Will you risk getting caught?"

"Yeah, I don't want to risk a broken neck" Jack said moving back to her bed.

"Don't worry" Nora said coolly "I've done it plenty of times"

"I'm sure you haven't" Jack said coldly

Nora was going to sharply retort, but Jack was quick to response "Fine!" he moaned loudly.

"Quiet!" Nora hissed "They might hear you".

“I‘ll do it” he said standing up.

A smiled stretched across her face “Great! I hope you like cotton!” Jack didn‘t quiet understand , watching Nora flip the covers of her bed and start yanking at her bed sheets he finally comprehended.

“No, no…” Jack said, backing away from Nora “I didn‘t want to go out of the window to begin with, there is no way that I’m abseiling out of your bedroom window, with your bed sheet!”

Nora ripped the sheet from her bed and held it out to Jack “It‘s either this or my mother”

Jack didn‘t have to give that a second thought “Give me the sheet!” he said hastily, taking it from her hands he walked stiffly over to the window. Clicking the latch he pushed the window open, and tossed the sheet over the ledge.

Jack held the sheet, the cotton fabric felt like silk under his finger tips. He could smell Nora scent radiating off the bed sheet. Nora thought that Jack’s laps in concentration was due to him facing heights. Nora opened the window and the still air of the

average night didn't disturb the curtains. She leaned over and took hold of Jack's shirt sleeve. He was still staring at the sheet and didn't notice Nora tugging on his shirt or moving him over to the window until he felt the difference in temperature. Jack lifted his head and was staring out into the night sky.

He half smiled, Nora presence made him nervous and more eager. More nervous because he didn't want to make a fool of himself, and make Nora laugh at him. Mora eager because the scent of Nora sheet was filling him with her scent which almost gave him the strength and determination to do this-or so he thought.

Jack flung the sheet out of the window it filtered down through the air dancing on the breeze that swept through before it lightly rested itself on the slope below her window. The sheet seemed in perfect synchronization with tiles fitting perfect into each shape. Jack hand Nora the sheet the put on foot out of the window.

Now Nora was the one who felt the pressure, she would have to hold on to the sheet while Jack was

hanging out of the window. She would be holding one-hundred and fifty pounds in the air, a whit sheet, a bed sheet, a cotton sheet.

Nora swallowed a large lump, and in the same second that Jack was bringing his second foot through the window, Nora put her hand on his shoulder.

“Don‘t” she said

“What? ” Jack asked turning his head back to look at her, his body still out of the window.

“Don‘t go out of the window” Nora said elaborating on what she was saying before. Now Jack was laughing, quietly enough though so her mom wouldn’t hear anything.

“Nora you were the one who told me too”

“Yes I was and now I’m saying don‘t” Nora ‘s brows furrowed, and Jack laughed. “What if you fall?” She said scared not wanting to think of that outcome.

“On grass?” Jack asked rolling his eyes.

“Just wait until we leave” Nora said hoping that he would agree to that, but Jack too easily found his way around that as Nora had done.

“Mary-Ellen!” he said

“The backyard” Nora said bringing up an another option that had been discussed and was sure that it wasn’t going to work but she still had hope. She was shocked at how much the tables-had-turned.

“Over-grown-hole-in-a-hedge. No thank-you” Jack smiled, Nora looked down. “Look at me” Jack said. “I trust you…and I think I would rather the grass on my back than scratches” Jack reached out and touched her hand that was wrapped tightly around the sheet, that her fingers were white and shaking. Her hand felt a few degrees cooler then his. Nora nodded keeping her eyes on him and then a smile stretched across her face.

“There we go” Jack said before he turned away and disappeared out her window. Nora could vaguely make out Jack shadow moving across the slanting roof tiles before the fell away to the ground.

“Oh I almost forgot” Jack said hurry back to the window. Nora leaned in to listen to what he was going to say squeezing the sheet.

“What?” Nora said quickly worried. Jack leaned his head through the window, millimetres from Nora worried face. “Don‘t let me fall” He smiled and disappeared again.

“Don’t hold it to me” Nora breathed.

She felt a tug on the sheet “Alright, you ready?” Nora let out a small sigh that told him she was ready.

Nora felt the extra pressure slowly build up. Becoming more and more strenuous she was staring to feel the stain on her muscles. She wasn’t able to adjust to the weight. She held onto the sheet with all her might knowing that if she let go she would be dropping Jack. She twisted the sheet around her wrist. The cotton from the sheet began to rub against her hand, burning it from the friction. She found her feet moving forward with out her knowing slowly she was bringing Jack closer to the ground. She didn’t know how much more she could take before she gave up and let him fall. she didn’t to give not

knowing what might happen to him. She didn't want him to fall to the ground not knowing how far he would have to fall before his body came in contact with the grass, and what it would feel like. Nora had felt the grass not long ago it wasn't as soft as Jack must have thought it was. She knew that it would hurt not matter where he would fall from. his whole body would be falling, but whether that would be from closer too the second floor or the first. Ten meters of two, it didn't matter because Nora would be the one that would have to face Jack -Dead or Alive- she would have to say sorry, but he would find some way to make her feel not bad about it. No matter how she would admit that it was her fault and that she had thought of it and convinced him to do it.

There was a knock at the door, Nora snapped her head up. She stopped her breathing and squeezed the sheet tighter.

Did someone know? Was their plan foiled?

"Nora?" Ethel said from the other side of the door. Nora knew that her mother knew.

“If we don‘t leave now you will be very late” Ethel sounded harsh. Nora had to go. Her concert, she had completely forgot.

She knew that if she didn’t come out of her room soon enough her mother would come in. Nora hadn’t noticed that she was at the edge of the window, and by the feeling in her arm and the pressure on the sheet she could tell the Jack had gotten down yet. How long did it take to climb down a bed sheet?

Ethel was starting to get suspicious-not that she wasn‘t already- so she decide to see what Nora was doing in her room.

She slowly turned the doorknob it clicked but nothing happen she pushed on the door but it didn’t budged.

“Damn” she muttered to her self making more failed attempts to open the door turning the handle. “blasted door handle” she started to shake the handle listening to it rattle around before giving up and walking away.

She stood at the top of the staircase “Nora Katherine Ann Greenhill, come out of your room this instant or else you wont be going” Ethel used what Nora called her ‘serious voice’ it didn’t have the desired effect that Ethel would have like but when Nora was younger it certainly worked.

Nora’s door open soundly and Nora stepped out she half-smiled at her mother but there was something in her eyes. About something she knew and Ethel didn’t. that frustrated Ethel. “Coming” Nora said in a voice that Ethel made squint in suspicion. Nora smiled and walked past her mother down the stairs to the front door.

Ethel was still standing on the top step “alright” she said to herself, then called out “Edmund? Time to go dear.” Edmund walked from his room to Ethel’s side taking her arm.

Ethel took one more long glance at Nora bed room before turning and being escorted down the stairs by Edmund.

Nora was shaking the whole car trip to the theatre, now all that she was thinking about was that this was

now or never. It was her time to shine. She had been waiting her whole life for this moment and she was sure that it would pass her by without her grabbing onto it and having a go at it. She was ready. She knew it and her parents knew it too.

Nora mentally went through her routine over and over in her had. Counting and making sure that she knew every move perfectly.

Ethel was sitting in the front seat with a smug smile on her face. She was happy to see her daughter perform. She hadn't really had time to get involved to much with her daughters passion. It had been years that had gone past- plenty of time for her to get involved but in that time she had never once asked Nora how her classes were or if she need help. Edmund had always been the one that asked those questions, he was the one that took her too and from her classes he knew all the French terms and their meanings and he even knew the five basic turned out positions of the feet.

Nora did once wish that her passion for ballet was something that she could share with her mother, but she leaned to accepted this long ago.

Ethel's mind was running over a phone conversation that she had four days ago. One that was not about the usual chit-chat but about Nora and her future.

* * *

When she had dialled the number for the American Ballet Academy she only had to wait for the phone to ring twice before someone picked up.

"Good-afternoon American Ballet Academy Simone speaking, how may a I help you?" said a lady who sounded like she had said that more then enough times to not even give any thought to what he was saying.

"Hello, Pamela Stern please" Ethel asked the lady on the other end of the phone who didn't seemed too troubled by how rude she was. she must have gotten it plenty of times to not think anything of it.

"What your purpose of calling?" lady named Simone asked half-heartily.

“I need to talk to her about and audition for my daughter ” Ethel said plainly and simply not going into too much detail.

“Listen lady…I get countless mom‘s calling each day trying to set up auctions for their daughters… and I tell them all the same thing” Simone paused “you can only get auditions for your daughters through a dance school” Ethel wasn’t pleased with the ladies tone.

“Excuse me” Ethel said “My daughter is doing her audition through the dance school… I need to talk to Pamela regarding the time and date” Ethel thought quickly, this hadn’t gone the way that she had thought. “please pass me onto Pamela? And the lady that I talked to last time was nicer than you.” Ethel said truthfully.

“Of course she was” Simone laughed “that was Ashlea, she‘s a little goody-two-shoes” Ethel remembered the nice younger girl who had been of much help the last time she tried to contact Pamela Stern- who coming out with Noel Rainey too Columbia to watch Nora perform. It was a far way

for them to travel. Nora's dance school was one of many sister ballet school to the American Ballet Academy. Now Ethel was now following through with her second idea that she had come up with, regarding 'How to get Nora to Sarah Lawrence?'

Simone cussed under her breath, then said "please hold on while I cheek if Pamela is available. If she is not do you mind being passed on to Noel?" Simone asked without caring for her tone.

"That would be fine." Ethel said in an over polite tone just to annoy Simone. There was a brief silence she herd some shuffling then more silence. Ethel rolled her eyes once more then waited.

"Hello?" said a voice that Ethel didn't recognize "this is Pamela… Mrs. Greenhill? How may I help you?" Pamela was much more polite than her receptionist, but she didn't let that worry her.

"Yes, I was just calling to inform you that your presence at my daughters concert wont be necessary" Ethel said getting straight to the point.

"Nora's Greenhill?" Pamela asked

Ethel smiled then realized that she couldn't see because she was on the other end of the phone line. "Yes that's right" she assured.

"Why not?" Pamela asked sounding upset "Nora is a wonderful dancer and her talents will be greatly appreciated at our school- her teacher assured us" Pamela's words made the guilt pile get bigger inside of Ethel, but she pushed it away without thinking twice.

"Yes well…" Ethel said smoothly "Nora had given up dancing to focus more on her studies."

"Oh…" Ethel her Pamela sigh on the other side of the phone.

"She is a very intelligent girl, she has been accepted to Sarah Lawrence"

"Well…" Pamela said flatly "at least she'll be in the same state. Goodbye Mrs. Greenhill, give my regards to Nora please…and tell her to come-by here one day…we'll chat"

"Of course…I will" Ethel said then hung her the phone "not" she said to herself then walked away.

When Ethel focused back into reality, Nora and Edmund were unbuckling their seatbelts and getting out of the car. Ethel quickly unbuckled her seatbelt and hope that none of them noticed her lapse in concentration. She walked next to Edmund on the way into the front door while, Nora blew them kisses and quickly ran off to her friend to go around to the stage door.

Ethel and Edmund found their friends and talked to them until it was time to enter the theatre and fine their seats until the show started

Backstage Nora was just in formed that she had five minutes until the show started. She was more nervous now. She was on in the middle of the show. She was finishing getting ready in her dressing room, there was a loud knock at the door. Nora put down her ballet shoes and dressed in her costume she went to answer the door. She opened the door to see Jack standing their with a large bunch of crimson roses in his arms.

He was panting fast with a laboured smiled on his face. Nora's nerves were suddenly gone when she saw him.

Jack held out the roses to her "Here" he said "I was standing in the auditorium holding these, and when my mom said that it was time to go in here" Jack took a long wheezy breath "then I remembered that I was still holding these and I wanted to give them to you" Nora reached out and took the roses from his arms, she breezily looked at them, then looked back at him. "Thank- you" she said quietly. Other dance students walked behind Jack looking at him as they passed.

"and then I ran out of the auditorium and I ran around the building until I found the stage door" Nora could hear approaching footsteps becoming louder. Jack heard the footsteps and quickly turned his head. Nora saw a flash of panic cross his face.

"Oh and I ran past your teacher who tried to catch up to me… but I'm to fast for her" Jacks aid sounding proud of himself for out running a fifty-two year old women.

“I‘m really scared of her” he said, Nora leaned her head out the door to see her ballet teacher five paces away.

“You there… get out of here this instant” she spat and Jack

“Best wishes” Jack quickly whispered to her before turning slowly to her teacher.

“I wish I could say the same for you. See you soon”

“You look beautiful” she heard Jack say quickly before she slipped back into her dressing room. Nora walked over to the mirror she put the flowers down in front of her and looked into the mirror.

Her face was a darker a few shades than usual, that was due to the amount of makeup she had on. Her eyes were darker, and her cheeks were a pale pink. Her head piece glittered form the light in her room casting a rainbow that she could see from the comer of her eye and was reflected off the mirror.

She stared for a long time into her mirrored eyes thinking over her routine. About the people watching her. About Jack.

He said she looked beautiful., and ironically tonight Nora felt the most beautiful that she had in her whole life. It wasn't because he had told her so. But because she was going to get to dance for him she had only danced for him once it wasn't much of dancing but now he would really get to see what she could do.

A few bars of music then a procession of clapping made Nora's heart rate rise again. She looked away from the mirror and continued to get ready.

* * *

That night Nora's dreams were entirely of her concert, she was standing in the wings waiting for the music to begin. The opened bridge started and Nora counted in her head.

Five, six, seven ,eight. One, two ,three, four.

Nora started on her toe then didn't her entrance on stage. She had danced for three counts of eight then realised that she their was nobody in the audience but Jack. Nora stopped in her place on stage looking out over the empty seats. Nora sighed and her breath

echoed through the emptiness bouncing of the walls and hitting her in the face. She taring into Jack eyes, he looked away from her shaking his head then standing up form his seat in the front row. He walked along the row his footsteps making no sound on the ground. He open the door on the side and exited letting the door slam and echo. Nora looked down at the ground and walked off stage.

The crack in Nora's drapes let only a fraction of sun through her window golden light spilt on her face and woke her up. She blinked, her eyes adjusting to the light then sat up straight in her bed, her quit cover was scratching on her legs, it was the first night that she had slept without any sheets in her bed. Nora got out of her beds her muscles aching, only to think about how well her solo had went last night. She had landed every jump and turned with poise. It was the best time that she had ever had in her life dancing, and she was glad that Jack had been apart of that.

Chapter 9

The Socialite [8] Charade

CHAPTER EIGHT

CHARADE

Nora sat on the front porch while her face was warm from the sun and the rest of her body was cold from being isolated in the shade of the roof covering her body on the steps. Nora stared absentmindedly letting her mind wander.

Many times the thought about what happened last night when her mother tried to get into her room to see what she was doing and at the time Jack was abseiling out of her window to make sure that she didn't find out that he was in her room.

Nora stared at the door handle her hands shaking heart racing pounding in her ears. She leaned her head out of the window making sure that her hand didn‘t move. She breathed the fresh air then said in a low voice “Jack?” she heard nothing and saw nothing in the endless black abyss.

“What?” she herd in the darkness.

“How far down are you?” Nora demanded. She herd nothing a but a few strained pants then “Not far to go…it‘s harder than you think”

“If we don‘t leave now you will be very late” Ethel sounded harsh. Nora had to go. Her concert, she had completely forgot.

She knew that if she didn’t come out of her room soon enough her mother would come in.

There was silence then Nora herd the door handle creak. She froze and stared at the handle and watch it turned anti-clockwise. She swallowed down a large bulge in her throat. She expected the door to open, but it never happened

“Damn” she herd her mother muttered to her self making more failed attempts to open the door turning the handle. “blasted door handle” Ethel started to shake the handle listening to it rattle around before giving up and walking away.

There was more silence then the sound of her mothers angered voice “Nora Katherine Ann Greenhill, come out of your room this instant or else you wont be going” Nora knew that her mother was serious- wasting time was something that her mother wasn’t fond of.

Nora leaned back out of the window and said “Jack I have to go…now”

“No…wait I‘m almost down just wait a minute”

“Jack I don‘t have time” Nora snapped back at him in the darkness.

There was a grunt form somewhere in the darkness “don’t you dare drop me Nora. Do you hear me? Don’t drop me I’m almost there”

“Sorry” she said half quietly, squeezing tightly once more on the sheet, then she let go. She felt the

material run past her fingers. Then the sheet was gone from sight and lost in the dark of the night. She listened hard then heard the sound that she didn't want hear; she heard a thump as Jacks body hit the ground, a loud moan of pain pierced through the night Nora half smiled she could imagine Jack laying on the ground moaning. Then Nora remembered her mother and she had to leave she would get the sheet from the ground in the morning before anyone could find it.

Nora focussed back in and remembered what she last thought about. The sheet , what happened to it. Did Jack take it or leave there without caring what happened to it. Nora stood up from her the top step brushing the dirt off her dress then she stepped down onto the path instead of walking up the path she walked around the front of her house to where Jack would have scaled down to the ground. The grass was as hard and rough as she had thought, each blade of grass scratched under her foot and was cold for the shade. There was nothing on the ground, the sheet was gone. Jack must have taken it and chances that she was going to get it back were slim.

Nora searched and looked around the ground for another traces of her sheet. Nora was annoyed she not only loved that bed sheet- it was the softest- but what would she do about getting a fresh sheet without Mary-Ellen knowing the linen closet was behind the kitchen near her room.

Nora gave up she turned and began to walk back to the house, then something white caught her eye. She hurried over to the bottom of a bush by the porch. An ivory square piece of cotton that Nora recognized instantly as a piece of her bed sheet. But where was the rest of it? Was this all that was left? How did this happen? Nora wasn't entirely sure about some of these answers, she wasn't sure what to think. She picked up the piece of bed sheet held in her hand for a few moments, the material felt soft but cold. Nora squeezed her hand closed and walked back into the house to hide it. She would keep it for as a memory for last night.

"Do you remember Lake Wylie?" Nora asked Jack that night when he and his family had come over for dinner.

“Yes” Jack replied “I haven‘t been their in …” there was a brief pause while Jack tried to count in his head just how many years it had been since he was last there “my, it has been eleven years”

“That long?” Nora asked her eyes widened in amazement she hadn’t realized that it had been that long.

“Lets go back” Jack said, Nora’s head shot up when he spoke “One last time lets go back” a laugh escaped through Nora’s lips and Jack rolled his eyes at her. Nora noticed the cold look on Jack’s face and she quickly wiped her smile away

“Oh your serious…” Nora said quietly “what are we going to go? What about school?”

Jack rolled his eyes again “Nora summer is on our doorstep… and school doesn’t start until September”

Nora brows creased “I‘m not sure…”

“Nora” Jack moaned “this is our last summer before college. Our last summer as kids. Our last summer to have some fun and enjoy ourselves. Our las -”

Nora cut Jack off his spiel was becoming annoying to her “Alright I get it…I guess you have a point thought” Nora looked into his eyes and saw the crescent rise at the edges, she glanced down from a second to see the smile on his face.

“It will be fun” Jack said “Just think we haven‘t been there in eleven years”

Nora looked away form him to spear a peace of potato with her fork, she tossed it in her mouth. The soft texture of the potato crushed easily under her tongue, it burned her tongue but she didn’t care.

“Your right I haven‘t had fun in eleven years. I think I deserve some…I just hope that it isn‘t completely like last time” Nora dropped her fork on her plate, a loud piercing sound cut through the air when the fork hit the china. Everyone at the table looked up to see what was happening, Ethel looked away quickly with little interest. Nora held out her right palm to Jack “Not like last time”

Jack looked at her hand, their was a palm length scar stretching from the bottom of her index finger to the

top of her pinkie. Jack cringed down at her scar “I‘m sorry” he said quietly.

“It‘s fine” Nora said quickly pulling her hand back from his view “you were keeping the secret” she half-smiled.

“I wish that I hadn’t… if I could take it back I would…” Jack said quickly but then trailed when Nora held up her hands at him.

“It‘s fine” Nora repeated “I forgive you now…” she turned slowly away from him to face her father she leaned into him and said “I think that we should go back to the lake this year…what do you say?” Edmund listened to her and it only took him a second to think through his answer.

She smiled a big smile flashing his teeth “That is a great idea… my it must have been eight years since we have been there”

“Eleven actually” Nora corrected him.

Edmunds eyes widened “My that long?” Nora pressed her lips together and nodded.

Edmund straightened himself up straight in his seat and looked down that table. Nora copied him, she pressed her back into the back of the chair. She let her right hand fall by the side of the chair. Something warm brushed past her hand she recognised as the back Jack's hand. She searched around for it, she found it and took hold of it. Jack reacted differently to how she thought, he didn't flinch away liked she had anticipated. Instead he held on tighter than anyone else had ever. She looked up to Jack who has his focus directed at Edmund, he was such a good actor. Then his glance was one her for a split second then directed back to Edmund. She saw a brief smile flash across his face. Nora copied him and looked at Edmund who cleared his throat loudly so that the whole room was filled with the sound of him trying to attract all attention.

Edmund smiled when all eyes were on him "It had come to attention that this summer we- the Greenhill family and the Finn family.- vacation in our holiday house at Lake Wylie in North Carolina" Nora's let her glance wonder around the room at the faces of the others. Martha and Ted had large grins on their faces

and seemed to have shared Jack's and Edmund's enthusiasm. But Ethel was the only one who wore a different expression to the others, her face was a mask of pure disgust. It was obvious to Nora that she wasn't happy about going to the lake, why thought? Nora didn't know. It made Nora curious she stared at her mothers face, studying it trying to figure out what it meant. She had a crease in her forehead, her brows furrowed and her lips pressed into a hard line. That usually meant anger but there was something more to it. Her eyes, they were a cross between frustration and stress. Ethel caught sight of Nora staring at her and she turned her burning glare on her. Nora failed to look away making it seem like she had a brief lapse in concentration she was hardly as good an actor as Jack.

"That is a fantastic idea" Martha said high and lightly "we shall go as straight after school finishes for you kids" Nora was surprised at Martha's enthusiasm and wished that she could share it with her.

"Indeed" Ted agreed, encouraging his wife. After it was agreed everyone melted back into their own

conversations. Talking about the lake making plans of their own.

“Well that got decided a lot quicker than I anticipated” Jack smiled turning to face Nora.

“Yeah” she half-smiled “almost everyone seem to be happy about it” her eyes quickly flashed to her mother then back to Jack.. He noticed thi9s but didn’t question it he thought that what every she was thinking was between her and her thoughts. And he had a soft respect for her privet thoughts whatever they may be.

Nora woke up a weeks later to see her suitcase packed by the door of her room., and she realized that it was the day that her and Jack with their parents went back to the Lake. She lied in bed with a smile on her face and wondered idly what had had happened to last week of school that had gone by so quickly- Prom and graduation with it- Jack had missed his chance to dance with Nora at the prom and regretted it deeply- though she didn’t know of it.

Graduation was such an exception, Nora sat and listened not as intently as Jack whom was excited

about the process of moving on form high school to college.

Nora was nowhere near as enthusiastic

“It’s a mind-numbing ceremony were you listen to boring speech’s then you stand up on stage and get a piece of paper telling you that you graduated from school… which we already know. What’s the point?” Nora complained to Jack when they met out the front of the school. Their walked ahead of them to fine their seats and Nora and Jack followed the other black robes into the school.

The ceremony went by quickly Nora nearly fell asleep during the principal’s address and almost missed her name being called out. She got up on the podium and got her certificate tripping on the last step. But finding her feet before she fell over completely. Nora couldn’t here any laughing and presumed that no one saw. But as she made her away back to her seat she saw her mother and father snickering quietly to themselves.

Nora stared the canopy of material hanging over her head, and was completely oblivious when Mary-Ellen

entered the room. She walked to the other side of the room and opened the curtains. Sunlight poured into the room and disturbed Nora's lapse in concentration, it annoyed her.

"Sorry to disrupt you miss, but everybody is ready down stairs" Mary-Ellen moved over to her closet and picked out the only dress that still hung there; the rest were packed away in her suite case she laid in on her bed.

"What's the time?" Nora said squinting away from the sunlight.

"It's nine-thirty Miss… your parents want to leave by ten at the latest. If I were you I would hurry up" Nora slipped out of her bed and moved over to her dress.

She looked over her shoulder and smiled "Thank you, tell them I'll be down in a minute"

Mary-Ellen bowed her head at Nora "Certainly Miss" then left the room.

As Nora walked down the staircase muffled laughter became louder and louder. Nora held her hand on the door she rolled her eyes as a procession of

laughter began again. She opened the doors and everybody in the room snapped their head up to look at her enter. She walked slowly to seat next to Jack and slumped in the cushion.

“Don‘t you look happy this morning” Jack said sarcastically.

Nora laughed “Yeah… good morning” Jack smile turned down “what’s the matter?” he asked.

Nora closed her eyes and shook her head “Didn‘t sleep well” Jack’s smile returned.

“Really… it seemed that you were sleeping well when we got here” a laugh pushed through his lips and Nora’s face screwed up in a cross of confusion and curiosity.

“How long have you been here?” Nora asked looking deeply into his eyes for the truth.

Jack shrugged “About and hour” Nora face had made no change when Jack told her she was still curious. “your parents told me to go up and try to wake you up, but you were sleeping so deeply that I just left

you” his smile heightened slightly at the edges briefly.

Nora Acquired a piece of toast from the holder in the meddle of the table and began to pick at it. Ethel leaned across the table at Nora.

“Morning darling” she half-smiled “sleep well?” she asked but her tone implied that it was out of making conversation.

Nora shrugged “Hmm…” Ethel’s expression told Nora that she wasn’t interested and mostly likely herd her and Jack’s conversation before. Nora looked away sheepishly, directing her main focus on her toast that was becoming cold quickly. She took one more bite then discarded it on Jack’s plate.

Edmund stood up from the table Ethel, Martha and Ted Followed him.

“Shall we” he said.

Martha smiled and said “Indeed” the four of them walked out of the door into the entrance hall.

Nora blinked slowly “Who am I riding with?”

Jack shrugged “Don‘t know…why?”

“Ever ridden in car with my mother?” Nora asked, Jack didn’t answer “Trust me you don‘t want too”

Jack took Nora’s word for it and didn’t want to test out her accusation.

They quickly divided up the cars seats. Nora was going to go with Jack and his parents. And Edmund and Ethel were going to take Mary-Ellen with them they would be there an hour later then them.

Nora and Jack talked for the first hour in the car when Jack fell asleep Nora had a short conversation with Ted then began reading.

Over the next few days leading up to the thirteenth, more and more people arrived at the house, for the birthday celebration.

Audrey and Samuel Hobart were the first to arrive. Nora greeted them with a kiss on the cheeks, they exchanged a few more words but fell short of attempting a conversation. Nora left them to settle-in and Ethel quickly took over and started talking to Audrey about the latest chit-chat. She excused Nora

for her bad behaviour telling her that she was going through a phase.

Later that day Clive and Julianne Reid arrived Nora felt more comfortable talking to them and they fell into a deep conversation with Clive about her college choice.

That night dinner was quiet only a few people talked amongst them selves, laughing quietly when something funny was said. Nora stayed up late talking to Jack on the porch then, while the others toiled around in the sitting room. Jack and Nora's parents stayed up longer while the other went to bed early tired of their day of travel.

The next morning Nora woke the sound of people laughing loudly in the hall. She fumbled out bed and walked to the door to find out what was going on, only to find that Jim Scott and his wife Annett moving into their room with the help of Samuel. They said hello to Nora and whish her good health before the disappeared into their room to unpack and freshen-up. Nora attempted to good back to sleep but the bright light of the sun outside made that hope

a lost cause. She got up put on her clothes and went down stairs. She skipped breakfast, and went to sit out on the swing underneath the spruce pine. Today wasn't as warm as the previous day, but it was still warm. The wind was blowing her hair off her face and played with the pages of her tattered copy of Mansfield Park. She flipped through the pages until she found where she was up to. She started to read, the shade of the tree covered her body but her legs were exposed to the warm sun that heated her legs.

“How many times have you read that now?” said Jack from behind her. She hadn't heard him come out. Nora jumped in her seat, “Tenth? Twentieth?” Jack went on, “Tell me when I get close” he started to laugh.

Nora huffed “Fifth” she said through her teeth.

“Ah fifth” Jack said “why do you love that book so much?” Nora slowly closed her book she didn't turn to look at Jack, she looked straight foreword into the woods, moving her eyes across the forest to the jetty then to the pristine water of the lake.

“Because…”she began “Sometimes I feel like I can relate to Fanny in someway” Jack let a laugh escape his lips at the mention of the name Fanny. Nora grimaced and continued to talk “…in the sense that I don't feel like I fit in… and then Edmund -the character, not my father- he makes her feel like to belongs their and he reminds me of you.He is also the most virtuous of the siblings: Maria and Julia are vain and spoiled and they remind me of the Reid and Schaffer twins, while Tom is an irresponsible gambler, and well I think of him as Benjamin Hobart. But over time, Fanny's gratitude for Edmund's kindness secretly grows into romantic love.” she blushed to admit that, and was glad that she was not facing Jack.

“I see…” Said Jack I a curious voice. “And reading this book reminds you of who you are- Fanny Price?” A small laugh slip through his lips “and everything thing that you just told me you can see in relation to real life- the Reid and Schaffer twins, Benjamin. loving me-”

“Whoa… what?” Nora said cutting him off. -“I never said that” -and was now really glad that she was not looking at him. Because she knew that he would see right through her poker face.

“Well you said that Edmund from Mansfield park reminds you of me and that you think your Fanny and in the end Fanny falls in love with Edmund- I‘m just connecting the dots.” Jack said hastily at Nora.

“I never said that I love you though” Nora could hear her heart picking up its pace. It was beating in her ears and she was sure that Jack could hear it too. He laughed, holding out his hands to grab a hold of on of the ropes that the swing was hanging from. And with little effort he turned the swing around twisting the ropes. Nora’s feet dragged on the ground in protest. In and instant she had gone from not facing Jack to looking at him in the eyes, as he bent down to eye with her still holding on to the rope to make sure that she would turn away form him again.

“Admit it” he smirked “You. Love. Me.” He move in to kiss he on the lips, expecting her flinch away, but she didn’t.

She kissed him back, his lips were soft and warm. Nora let go of her book-it slid onto the ground- and wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled him into her. Their lips parted but their foreheads were touching.

“I love you…” Nora breathed.

“I knew it” Jack joked. They kissed again.

“Nora” Jack gasped in an interval in their kissing “I love you too” they kissed “Fanny” he laughed, but was cut of mid laughed when Nora pulled him into her meeting their lips together. In their next interval Nora gasped. “I read that book the day that you came back to Columbia” then she smashed her lips back into his but he suddenly Jack broke the kiss he stood up looking puzzled, he let go of the swing and it swung back to it’s original position

“What?” he asked perplexed.

“I woke up that day, walked into my library and just started to read. I didn't know why but I just wanted to read it” she said in a flat voice to the ground. “all that day I had a strange feeling that some form of

change was coming. Even that night when you where holding me in your arms. That night it was a new moon, and that night everything in my life changed. You had come back to me. Dose that not count for something" she loved Jack terrible so much that it could be a sickness, and he loved her too.

"Yes it dose" Jack walked around the swing to Nora he put his hands on her shoulders and leaned down and kissed her. Nora started to protest, but she found herself getting caught up in the moment. Resting her complaints, she put her hand softly against his shoulders. Moving his hand away from her shoulders, Jack wrapped his hands around her neck. The kiss lengthened and Nora lost all sense of time.

Their was a sudden car honk coming from the trees. Jack and Nora parted quickly straightening themselves out. Nora sat back down on the swing, trying to act nonchalant.

Jack looked down sheepishly and watched as two cars appeared from around the corner. The last three families were here. The two cars pulled to a stop lined up next to the others. Elliott and Eliza Schaffer

got out of the cars that stopped first, Nora waved to them form the swing as they approached.

Kimberly Hallett and her husband Leroy got out of the car at the end on the line.

“Hello” called Leroy from his car door.

And after and while a third and finale car came through the trees and stopped by the Hallett car. Angus March got out of the car and ran around the side to open the door for his wife Danielle.

The front door of the house opened, Nora and Jack’s parents walked out of the house first down the stairs. Later followed the other families.

Jack stood and watched as they greeted each other. Nora stood silently and walked foreword to greet them all.

“Nora dear” greeted Leroy “You looked more beautiful every time I see you.”

Nora smiled “Oh, thank-you Leroy” she hugged him, he was like an uncle to her. She looked behind her to see Jack watching her from the swing with an

apologetic expression. He turned and walked back to the house with a final glare before he disappeared.

This confused Nora, she couldn’t understand, what just happened. Why was Jack so upset? Or angry?

Because he kissed her? That kiss was a mistake, it shouldn’t have happened. She shouldn’t have let herself get caught up in the moment. It was stupid. She liked Jack, but did she really like him like that?

I have got to sort this out, she thought.

The house was alive, in full motion. It was that time in summer when the house was the fullest- Edmund’s birthday. Everybody was happy to have so mush presence in the house, everybody but Nora. It wasn't that she didn't like the people or their children but it was that everybody was so absorbed in their own gossip to care about anything else. It annoyed Nora to distraction.

When Jack didn’t appear for lunch, Nora started to get suspicious.

Standing by the door of his room, she wasn’t sure how to talk to him, how to word her sentences-

which was odd because she always knew what to say. What made this so different?

Before she had time to knock, the door opened, Nora jumped. Jack stopped and looked at her with a plain expression, as if he knew that she was already there.

“Jack” she said, he ignored her. Pushing past he walked down the hall.

“Jack wait up” she complained with a flustered sigh, as she descended the stairs after him. “Please… stop.”

He threw the front door open and walked out, hurrying across the beach, he tripped constantly over his feet.

“Please Jack just wait!” Nora said panting; she had to run to keep up with Jack’s long strides.

Swiftly he turned on his heels; she wasn’t expecting that and nearly ran into him. He caught her by the shoulder and held her there until she was steady; he dropped his hands and kept them there, not directly looking at her in the eyes.

“What?” he growled “What do you want? Hmm, what is it that you want from me?”

Nora hadn’t seen this coming “Y-You were ignoring me.”

“What did you expect after the way you treated me?”

“What?” Nora’s voice was shrill with disgust. The way she treated him? “What‘s that suppose to mean?”

“Oh, don‘t be so naïve Nora!” His voice as sharp as daggers. They cut through Nora, and they hurt.

“What do you mean?” she said “None of this makes sense”

“Come on!” he hissed “Don‘t pretend for one second like you didn’t kiss me”

“That kiss wasn‘t meant to happen” Nora turned on her heels to walk away.

“Don‘t act like you didn‘t enjoy it Nora, you know you did”

Without a second thought Nora turned back, Jack didn’t have time to react. Nora swung out her hand, and it collided with Jack’s cheek. Caressing his skin

with a fresh mark, that was the shape of Nora's hand and the color of rear meat.

He put his hand lightly to his cheek.

Nora was angry now, really angry. That slap was full of all her built up steam. But did she have to let everything out on Jack? "Yes, that kiss happened. Yes, it was good, but it was wrong, it shouldn't have happened."

"Then why did you tell me you loved me?"

"That was wrong too"

"Wow, you have no idea how much you sound like your mom right now"

Nora swung out to hit Jack again, but he was ready this time, he caught her hand and pulled her closer. Nora grimaced with attempted struggles

"Don't say that it was a mistake because I know that you enjoyed it as much as I did"

Nora looked silently into his eyes. "It was a mistake" she whispered.

Like before, Jack didn't hesitate, he pulled Nora closer until their lips meant. Nora protested like before, and this time her demand were met, she managed to break free.

Walking away from Jack, to the road he called out to her "What are you doing?"

She stop, turned and said "What I should have done last time."

He started to moving towards her, she didn't move "Which is what exactly?"

"Your right." she said shrugging "I not saying I didn‘t kiss you back, but I shouldn't have."

"Nora. You had the chance to walk away last time, why didn‘t you" he was close enough for her to touch now.

"Because, I was afraid of what might happen."

"What did you think would happen? Nora, don‘t deny yourself happiness just take a chan-"

Nora didn't wait for him to finish, she wrapped her arms around his neck, pulled him in and kissed him.

But before Jack had time to react, she pulled away again.

“That” she said panting. “I was afraid of that…”

“Of love?”

“Of loving you, I didn’t to wreck anything between.”

Around lunch time Nora and Jack decided that they would take a walk into town. It was a very far walk but they had time, and much to talk about. Nora needed to get her father a birthday present so she thought that this would be the best opportunity. She picked up her hat and sat it in place on her head. She slid her gloves on her hands then picked up her coin purse and left her bedroom. Jack was waiting for her by the open front door, which was blowing the hot air from outside. She walked through it and Jack closed the door behind himself. He walked next to Nora down the stairs and across the beach. When the house was no longer in sight Nora held out her hand and Jack took a hold of it. The walked to town holding each others hands.

In town Nora caught sight of a book shop and thought she'd try her luck at finding her father a present in their. Jack kissed her on the head and told her that he'd catch up with her in the dress shop across the street he needed a new suite for tomorrow night.

Nora opened the door to the book shop, the little bell above announced her entrance, and the old lady behind the counter looked up. She looked like the over helpful kind, she smiled and said "May I help you dear?" a little nicer then usual. Nora half smiled back and shook her head.

"Let me know if you need any help" she said sounding hopeful. Nora walked foreword to the first shelf she looked up and down at the different selections of books. This book store was poorly sorted and had little stock. Nora didn't think that she would find anything in here. Then a small blue book cover sitting on the end of an isle caught Nora's eyes. The book was 'Wuthering Heights' , Nora remembered having to read it in ninth grade and she new that her father had seen the play. Nora thought that she'd buy

the book for her father. It probably was the best thing that she would be able to find. And she promised her self that she would not leave her father birthday present to last minute next year. Nora reached out and took the book from the shelf. she walked back down the isle to the front counter, where the lady at the front desk was beaming with delight. Nora couldn't pick up whether the smile was fake or genuine.

“That one dear?” she asked, though it was kind-of obvious that was the only item in her hand. Nora placed the book down on the counter, the old lady pressed a few buttons on the cash register and it made some funny noises.

“A dollar” the lady said, she pushed her glasses higher up on her nose and looked at Nora open her coin purse. She had more notes in her purse then coins, and most likely more money than the old women- whose name tag announced her as Francis- would probably make in one day’s work. But Nora shuffled through her notes until she found a dollars note, and then handed it to the lady. For a split-

second her finger touched the lady’s hand it was cold and rubbery. Nora picked the book up from the counter and walked out of the door the bell ringed as she left. The door closed with a click, and Nora set her eyes on the men’s dress shop across the street, she had time so she decided to dawdle. She walked slowly down the street looking into various windows. She waited until there was not on car in the street to cross. Walking slowly she stepped on all the white lines making sure not to touch the black. She walked up the street and came to n abrupt stop at a store window next to the shop that jack was in. it was an antique Jewellery shop. In the window was a display of beautiful pieces of Jewellery. There were diamond earrings, and gold pendants. The sales man walked to the window and picked up an item holder that was holding nothing. Someone must have bought it already. Nora didn't get to see what the tag said it was. Just then a fat man with a small hat sitting on the side of his head walked past Nora, he turned and walked into the dress shop next to her where Jack was. Nora followed the man inside.

The dress shop was dimly lit and smelt like tobacco. Nora saw Jack standing on a podium turning slowly around in front of three mirrors standing next to each other. He was wearing a black suite. Nora walked over to him he noticed her in the reflection of the mirror and immediately stopped spinning he blushed, but it wasn't noticeable in the dim light of the shop.

“What do you think?” Jack asked quietly. Nora half-smiled .

“See anything that you like?” Jack said, Nora shrugged.

She looked into the mirror at him. Then her eye caught something on the other side of the shop. She turned slowly and walked over to two mannequins. The tag announced them as the ‘royal gala couple’

It was a male and female outfit. The males was charcoal gray almost black with a fine thin stripe, the jacket was double breasted and the outfit was complemented with a matching dark blue pocket square and suite tie, that was pinned in place with a matching sapphire tie pin.

The female dress was blue- the same shade as the tie and pocket square- with ruffles around the arms that sat on the shoulders. It was made out of a very fine silk that had small yellow flowers in the material. It was the most beautiful dress that Nora had ever seen. She reached out and touched the silk, it was so thin and soft.

“I want this one” she stared at the dress. Jack came up next her.

“This one?” he asked reaching out to feel the silk for himself. Nora nodded “They don't match” Nora said turning to look at Jack’s suite.

“Then we‘ll make it” he walked around Nora to the male suite. He touched it then looked back at Nora and smiled.

That night was worse for Nora, during the day everybody would be toiling around on their own, and at the dinner table everybody was together in the same room. It was so congested for Nora.

But she was able to make it through the night without more then having a three worded

conversation with anyone. She went up into her bedroom and read until she fell asleep.

That night she dreamt about the blue dress. She was walking slowly down the staircase, but it wasn't the staircase here it was the staircase at her house. She was holding someone’s hand as she came down the steps. Everybody was looking at her enter, when she looked over to see at whose hand she was holding it wasn't Jacks hand like she’d thought. It was Jackson’s. Nora squealed lost her balance and fell down, and tumbled to a stop at the foot of the stairs. Her dress had caught on the carpet that ran up the stairs and it tore her dress off her. There was small pieces of blue material scattered up the stairs. Nora was lying on the floor in front of her parents and all their friends whit nothing but her undergarments on. She couldn't bare to face them she just lay on the floor hoping to die.

The bright morning sun coming through the window woke Nora, when she opened her eyes she saw the day was perfect. Not one cloud dared to disrupt the sky.

It was the thirteenth of August-her dad's birthday, moaning Nora wanted to go back to sleep, she closed her eyes, then heard a loud bang from the kitchen.

She raced downstairs, pushing open the door to the kitchen she saw Mary-Ellen on the floor picking a various bowls and kitchen utensils.

When Mary-Ellen finally noticed Nora standing at the door she got a fright "Sorry miss did I wake you?"

"No, no" Nora said quickly "I was already awake" she moved over to Mary-Ellen and began helping her. "What happened?" she asked picking up a fork and placing it in the draw.

"Mouse," she said quietly "in the cupboard, I wanted to get it… and Miss Ethel hates mice."

Nora nodded "That's true, did you get it?" she asked, looking around the room. Mary-Ellen smiled smugly and pointed to a gray mouse that was lying on its back, a metal bowl upside down next to it.

"Good job" Nora congratulated her.

"May I get you something to eat?"

Nora shook her head “No thank-you, I’m fine”

She left and returned to her room to change her clothes, she wasn’t hungry this morning either. Her dream about Benjamin had made her loose her appetite. She decided on a walk to clear her head, strolling along the beach bare footed she came to the jetty. Walking along it until she came to the end, she sat down and let her feet fall over the sides, dipping lightly in the water.

Leaning back she let the sun warm her face, her mind wander aimlessly.

Nora was at peace…she was reminded why she loved this place so much.

“What are you doing here?” the silence was broken, turning around Nora saw Jack standing at the end of the jetty.

“Just escaping, getting away from it all, peace and quite” she sighed lightly. “Don't you tire from it at all sometimes? Putting up with this charade, and playing along with everything.”

Jack moved foreword “I believe that we play the roles that we were born to play. Besides what makes you think, that you can escape from it here?”

Nora shrugged.

“Come on, I’m taking the boat out. I know a place… now I’ll show you peace at quite” he chuckled and held out his hand, Nora stared at the hand in hesitation, then reaching to take it.

Chapter 10

The Socialite [9] Reflection

CHAPTER NINE

REFLECTION

The boat moved evenly through the water, Jack steered the boat from the front, whilst keeping a predominate amount of attention on Nora.

The forest was thicker around the edge of the lake. It teemed with life, bird's hummed delightful harmonies, pitching through octaves. Dragon flies, danced playfully above the water and lazy deer lopped on the waters edge enjoying the delightful peace.

“It’s beautiful” Nora sighed.

Jack smiled. “Yes, you are.” Nora blushed and looked away; edging herself off the seat she laid back propping her head up on the seat, she slowly closed her eyes soaking up the sun. In her head she replayed the kiss between her and Jack as she watched the colors dance behind her lids.

A few moments passed in silence, Jack in awe at Nora. Leaving his position at the front of the boat, he edged closer to Nora. He lay next to her, resting his head on the seat, lightly brushed his fingers across hers, intertwining them together. Her hands were softy and smooth.

“I wish this could last… forever” Nora sighed, opening her eyes and turning her head back to Jack.

He smiled weakly “Nothing can last forever Nora.”

Nora grimaced faintly unable to bring up enough energy to scold at the thought. “But, I want it too.” She said, her voice almost sounded like a beg.

“I know. I wish it would too. There is nothing I would change about this…not even you.” Jack said lightly.

“I wish. I could hold on to this moment forever” Nora sighed.

“Then. Grasp this moment while you can.”- Jack whispered. - “And never let go”

“And if I can't? Nora said worryingly.

“Then hold on to me, a I will help you” Jack replied finally drawing his eyes away from her face, in a spilt second to look down, where his hands were intertwined in hers.

Jack huffed, slowly sitting up. Nora’s hands were still holding his in a firm grasp, she never wanted to let go.

She slowly sat up next to him. When she finally released his hand, she wanted it back immediately. She followed him to the end of the boat, snatching up his hand;

He smiled softly, turning the boat towards a small stretch of undisturbed beach. Nora’s eyes widened when she saw the stretch of beach, how romantic, she thought.

As soon as the boat slowed onto the shore bank, Jack leaped from the boat. He un-latched a thick rope, that was attached to the front on the boat, and hoisted the rope on to his shoulder.

Nora began to stand as Jack gave one force full tug on the rope, the boat jerked forward- wedging itself on to the sand- caused Nora to fall forward in the boat. She started to giggle as lifted her head, her hair spilling over her face.

Pushing her back, Jack was suddenly in front of her, she giggled again. Standing up again, steadying herself she jumped from the boat.

“I would have helped you” Jack insisted.

“I’m perfectly fine on my own” Nora smiled, moving past him. Jack caught up to her quickly wrapping his arm around her waist.

She stopped, stared; the heavy smell of lake had faded into the air, mixing in with different aromas. Nora smelt traces of pine needles and tree sap- like back at the house- and wild flowers but there was no smell of tobacco. The trees that enclosed around the

beach were thicker; none had to be cut down, they were just there.

It was just like the same place her house was, but smaller.

Less space but much nicer.

She looked at Jack; he still had his eyes on her, and then smirked “What is this place?” she asked, just millimeters from his face.

“Mine” Jack said.

“I love it!” Nora said turner her face away from Jacks, the proximity caused Nora’s cheeked to brush Jacks lips.

“Come…” Jack said beckoning he grasped her hand he pulled her away “This isn't all I wanted to show you”

Nora smiled and allowed herself to be pulled into the forest, the sand beneath her feet changed to damp earth and twigs.

Nora wasn’t wearing any shoes and the twigs on the ground scratched her feet. She turned to see the

beach fade as they became enclosed in trees. Around, everything was green, except when a break in the canopy would let ray of golden light through- they were always the warmest parts.

“How much further?” Nora complained out loud, with a couple more strides she could make out the sound of rushing water.

Jack smiled “Not far now” he said smugly. He pulled Nora along faster than before, and the sound of water became louder and louder.

He broke through the last of the trees, revealing the source of the sound.

“Welcome” he whispered to Nora looked away, because in front of her -where the forest suddenly went steep-was a small pool with a creek running off it down a hill-which probably lead to the lake.

Around the pool were scattered patches of wild flowers that bloomed at the base of thick trees. The trunk covered in moss, as were the rock and stones that surrounded the pool along with thick ferns. Overhead a large break in the canopy spilled a large

ray of light into the opening that played on the waters surface. It was perfect, like fairy-tale.

“What do you think?” he asked a rhetorical question.

“It’s perfect” Nora sighed with a melted expression, shaking her head. “This is everything that I wish for… and more, you’re here with me” they moved to the rim of the pool.

Nora stood on the very edge, her feet curling over the smooth rock. She looked into the glowing clear aqua-blue water to see her own reflection looking back at her, Nora winced at the reflection-and she copied.

“You know what I see when I look in the mirror?” she asked transfixed with the girl looking up at her from the water-her lips moving with the words as Nora said them.

“The same beautiful face that I see?” Jack replied worryingly, his words sincere.

“No!”-Nora’s voice sounded sharper then intended.-“No.”–she said again quitter not meaning to hurt Jack feelings, letting go of his hands she fell to the rocks leaning out over the water, staring closer at

the girl, trying to find an imperfection, that proved it wasn't really her.

I see someone…who doesn't like who she is. Who doesn't like the type of life that she had no choice to live. The life that she was born into, she doesn't know who she is and never decides things for herself. When She…I...look into the mirror the reflection I see is unclear. I don't know what I want, and I don't know who I am,"

"Nora what do you mean that you see yourself unclear?" he said lifting her chin with his hand, she look into his eyes- there. That one blue one green eye that always made her feel safe.

"I do." Jack whispered, a tear fell from her eye onto her cheek. Jack whipped it away with a finger tip.

"I don't know who I am... but when I'm with you, I can be whoever I want to be. I can be me and it is because of you that I am thinking for myself for once, and making my own decisions… you are letting me be free. Because that is all I want and when I am free, I get to be with you. I think about my future, and

you're in it" Nora smiled rising to her feet and to unbutton her dress.

After the last button was unhooked, her dress fell to her feet and she dived into the pool, water splashing in every direction splattering Jack's pants. Nora's head raised out of the water her perfect chocolate brown curls the wet and ruined, she smiled smugly at Jack, who leaped to his feet, he stared to undress him self as well. The sun praised his perfect body, like he was a god. He smirked then dived into the water. He came out of the water just millimetres from Nora's face; the water only went up to Jacks stomach, he wrapped his arms tightly around her waste. Nora slowly moved he arms up the sides of Jack's body and hooked them around his neck. She was held in his arms, millimetres from his face, and his cool breath blew into her. Her breathing became more rapid, eyes locked on each others, Nora slowly moved her hands from around his neck, and she slowly moved hers hands down the centre of his back, tracing his spine, and back up again. They stared at each other with longingness. Jack slowly moved closer to Nora, closing the distance in

between their faces, he closed his eyes, Nora copied. Then pressed his soft lips to Nora's. They broke apart gasping for air. They both drew another long breath they locked onto each others lips once more. Their breaths became ragged, lips never parting, breathing on each other through their noses. Nora's hands drew up Jack's spine, and traced the back of his neck, until they were twisting wildly through his hair, his arms tightened around her waist. They slowly broke apart opening there eyes and gazing back at one another. A small smile with a hint of smugness crossed both of there face at the same time. Nora carefull untangled her fingers that were still mangled in Jack's perfect honey blond hair, and moved them back to around his neck.

"Oops" whispered Jack. Nora released her self from Jack; she floated backwards towards the edge of the pool. She looked around then said. "How did you find this place?" She looked back to Jack who had floated to the opposite end of the pool; he was gazing at her – of course- "do you remember about ten years ago. It was the last time we where here it was your dad's birthday again. I think? I had gotten up in the

morning and gone out side, not really thinking over it I walked into the woods I had walked for about seven miles. Still not really think about anything just walking, put one foot in front of the other. Letting them lead the way instead of my head. I started to get thirsty, and then I heard a sound. It was loud so clear, and it was close, so I kept on walking following the sound. Not my feet. Not my head. The sound, it lead through the tree to this place. I was so thirsty that I drank from it, while I was so good, clod washing away the sting of dry thirst, I must have leaned over the side and I fell in. I got out, and then I didn't know which way I had come from so I started to walk again. And then I found the beach. I kept close to the beach and it lead me back to the house. You where out side, on the swing of the spruce watching me come back. And you started to ask me where I went but I didn't want to tell you, I said I went for a walk but you wouldn't believe me. I didn't want anyone to know about me privet pool”-he stuck his hand out of the water and gestured to the surroundings-“ so you stomped of into the house and didn't speak to me again for the rest of the holiday. Now I wish that I

had told you. But still… you are here now, and I know that this was the right time to show you. What did you think of the beach?” Jack let out a large huff. That was the longest speech that Nora had every heard Jack say. Nora shrugged her shoulders.

“It looks just like the other beach …why?” she asked cursorily, she squinted her eyes together.

“Because I want to know what you think of it. Because if you don't like it then I won't have to bother” he said coolly. Nora Squinted harder.

“Bother?” she asked looking at Jack up and down. Jack didn't answer his face stayed plain. Nora watched him, he stunk back into the water, after a second the surface smoothed over then bubble raised to the surface a popped. Jack resurfaced his blond hair wet, and dripping down his face. Jack floated over the water fall that was to the right of him and left of Nora. Jack went underneath it; the water splashed his face, his eyes clenched tightly together. Nora continued to go over the conversation trying to figurer out what he had meant. But came up with nothing, and dwelled on the hastily end to the

conversation. And she would go as far as she could to get the answer. It bugged Nora that she could not suppress the thought that Jack’s statement had meant something else, deeper and more meaningful. She couldn't let the desire to question Jack’s statement be lost in her thoughts. It was sitting at the for-front of her mind; she did her best to push it to the back of her head, and decide that she would ask him again later. She didn't not want this to be the end of conversation. Not because she was scared that the slice might lead to full slice twenty-four-seven. But because she wanted to hear Jacks voice again, surely the memory of his voice would not be as good as the real thing. So she looked around to find something that would be half worth-full of conversation, until her eye lead her back to Jack, who was still under the water fall, letting the water pour and splash onto his face, a beaming grin was stretched evenly no teeth showing in case and water go through them. Nora opened her mouth and hastily “Where dose the water come from?” Jack looked up, bewildered. “Huh…? He asked not hearing what Nora had said. The sound of the crashing water against his face.

Blocked out all sound but running water. He swam forward, out form underneath the waterfall, over to her millimetres from her face.

Nora repeated her question slowly from Jack to hear. “Where dose the water come from?”

“Oh” he said faintly shocked at the turn of conversation that he had hoped for “there is a creek that flows down from the mountains” he said in a plain voice.

That had ended the conversation, and Nora didn't want to attempt it again, she was fed up with trying to make conversation.

As the afternoon sun hung low over the western mountains, Jack and Nora. Hand in hand. Finally came through the last of the trees onto the beach Nora centimeters behind him stopped as soon as the sun touched her face on the very border of forest and beach. Jack continued to walk not noticing Nora sudden freeze, and then immediately tripped back when he was tugged, buy her frozen body, in the suns raise.

“Bother?” repeated Nora in clear voice. She was re-asking the question that Jack had ignored before at the waterfall

“Bother with what exactly?” she said raising her right eye brow. Jack had to take his time to put his thoughts together- Nora waited patiently -Trying to see what she was referring to.

It clicked.

“Oh!” he said, hesitating to answer. Putting his sentence together-picking out the right words to use. He turned to face her now. He pulled her towards himself and took her waist in his arms. Looking deeply into her eyes

“Well, this land is mine. No one else besides you knows about this place though. The waterfall too…

I’m going to build. You. A house. If you like.” Nora’s eyes widened, Jack smiled then huffed a tiny laugh.

“This is the lake where we met. This is the lake where I first saw you… I first loved you…. The day that I first met you. I imaged the rest of my life, with you. And what it would be like. And it, you, is all I want, and

dream of. For the rest of my life. You." He finished, Nora still locked in his arms and gaze. She moved her body in tighter and closer to his, she reached up her soft lips pressed against his, they parted and Nora smiled a crooked smile that reached her eyes.

"I want you for the rest of my life" she said returning his gaze, with warm eyes. She moved her hands up from where they were placed on his shoulders and moved them through his now damp hair, twisting her fingers through his prefect golden locks.

"I'll always want you" she said lightly in a soft voice

"And, I'll always want you" he said mirroring her voice and tone. They kissed each other for a long moment, her fingers twisting more angrily through his hair. They parted and both drew in long breaths. Smiling, Jack unlocked Nora from his body and slid his hands down to entwine with her fingers. They strolled lightly through the sand until they reached the boat that was still wedged between the sand on the shore, Jack turned to put his arms low around Nora's thighs. Meaning to pick her up and put her into the boat, so that he could push the boat from the

shore into the water. Nora put her hand on his shoulders the way she always did. She lifted her right eye brow. “What are you doing?” she demanded. Jack straightens his legs, standing straight. Sliding his hands up the sides of Nora body.

He huffed then said “Fine” giving in, he let go of her, and she walked forward towards the boat. She put to hands on the front locked her knees. She looked up to Jack who was standing calmly legs apart arms folded with a smirk on his face, Nora playfully stuck her tongue out at him, and with all her might she pushed the boat. It jerked backwards slightly, Nora tripped forwards due to this. She fell to the sand on her hands. Jack laughed a booming laugh that that echoed all around. A few scared fluttered out of trees, not far behind in the forest. He walked forwards and helped Nora to her feet. She just stared at him, both eye brows raised. He laughed again. Jack took her hand and led her back to the boat. With her hand still in his he lifted both hands, she mirrored. Locked his legs the pushed she copied, the boat moved evenly backwards into the water. Nora continued to push the boat into the water, the lake

was colder than the waterfall pool, it was up to Nora knees, and Jack had stopped pushing the boat a few meters back. Nora looked back at him, he smirked, Nora lost her Concentration and again, her hand slipped from the boat and she fell. But, this time it was in the water. She came out of the water her hair was over her face. Stuck, wet and dripping. She flipped it over her head with her hand, she looked up to see Jack smile. He had his right hand outstretched

“How many times will you knock me over” Nora joked. She giggled and Jack laughed. The water had wet Jacks pants up to his knees. Nora took his hand. He pulled her out of the water; she was dripping as she stood firmly on the floor of the lake that squelched under her feet. It always felt odd to Nora but she loved the feeing. Nora let her hand drop from Jacks he smiled briefly then, turned to the boat. He grasped the edge with both hands and pushed down. The boat tipped towards him. Nora waded through the water to the boat then she jumped up into the tipped side. She sat there with her feet over the edge dipping in the water she looked at Jack and smiled. She took her right hand that grasped the rim of the

boat and lightly stoked his shoulder. She moved her hand up the side of his face and moved it fingers through his perfect-damp-blond hair. He eased himself carefully onto the boat using more concentration than Nora. She took her hand out of his hair. When he was on the boat she moved it back to his hair. The down the side of his face stroking his cheek up and down ad few time before tracing his perfect chin with the side of her hand, then moving her hand down his neck to his shoulder and down his arm. Nora leaned in and kissed his neck between his chin and shoulder. Then like whip-lash. The laps in concentration that Jack didn't want to happen. The boat swung back from the tipped position that Jack had kept it in, too were it normal sat up right in the water. They fell backwards in unison, Nora’s head hit the bottom of the boat first with a deafening crack Jack huffed and clenched his teeth together to fight back the sudden pain that wrenched his head.

Nora shrieked.

Jack pushed his pain to the back of his mind and turned to help Nora, thinking that she might be seriously injured.

“What’s wrong? Are you hurt? Is it your head?” he didn't know what to say. His voice cracked. Nora eyes were clenched shut, she was slowly moving from left to right, rolling around moaning.

“Ugh!” was always she could let out.

“What is it?” he moved closer his head seared with pain, but he ignored it. He leaned in closer to Nora and put his left hand on her head. Then Jack noticed that her hands weren't on her head, instead her left hand was wrapped around her right. She continues roll moaning, her face screwed with agony. Jack was in pain. Not the type that exited in his head but wondering if Nora was alright. What king of pain was she in? Was it her head of her hand? Had she broken it?

“Nora! Nora, look at me. Look at me. Are you okay. Is it your head? Did you hurt your hand?”

“Splinter” Nora shrieked. Rolling over to face Jack. Her face was torn, pain stricken, holding out her hand to Jack. The stinging pain raged on inside her index finger, throbbing, she could feel her pulse being mirrored within it.

“Get it out, get it out. Get. It. Out. Ouch it hurts, it hurts” Nora cried, Jack lamely rolled his eyes. “Oh it’s only a splinter” Nora shot him a grimace, with sincere disgust.

“Sorry honey. But, I thought that it could be worse.” He half smiled to her, and she grimaced at him again.

“Yeah, I’m sure you are really thinking that” she said sarcastically, he took her arm which was still out stretched.

“I don't have nails, you do realize that don't you?” Jack chuckled, Nora just shook her.

“Just try.” She huffed. Jack held her hand in his left, her index finger extended with his right hand hover over, he twiddled his fingers. Jack fumbled then lowered them to her wound, the splinter was large and easy to remove jack had no trouble with it. Nora

winced as the pulled it out, and released a breath that she had been holding in. The pain and sting of the splinter had gone as quickly as it came. There was little blood; Jack wiped it away with the sleeve of his shirt. Still holding Nora's hand he lowered in and lightly kissed her finger tip.

"All better" he sighed. Nora smiled and nodded her head.

"Thank-you" she breathed, Jack leaned in again an kissed her wrist, he kept moving up her arm, kissing every square inch, he dropped her hand when he had finished kissing it, and had moved on to her neck. She wrapped her arms around his waist, pulling him in closer. Her wet dress stuck to her body. Jack had moved on to her lips. There was a sudden edge to his kissing; it was much more intense and fierce. He moved his hand through her hair, getting his fingers tangled within, then yanking them through to freedom. It hurt Nora but she ignored it she moved her fingers up and down his back. Jack gasped finally parting with her lips. Nora dropped her hands from around his body. He moved up to the

seat and Nora followed him mirroring his movements. She sat next to him, his left arm behind her. Nora rested her head on his shoulder and her hands rested in her lap, and Jack slowly paddled away from his privet beach.

The clouds where orange but the sky was still blue, as the sun started to set behind the tree tops in the distance. Jack helped Nora onto the jetty, then turned around to tie off the boat. He turned back to her and walked with his arms around her off the jetty towards the house. The sand stuck to her wet feet, but she brushed them down at the front door. Jack held the door open for her, she smiled then crossed the threshold. The house was warm, and dimly lit from the ever fading sun, but soon enough people would start to turn on lights. Nora walked straight for the stairs, but failed to avoid accusation from her parents and their guest in the sitting room.

“What happened to you?” Ethel gawked, and walked towards Nora.

Her hair was still wet and dripping down her dress- which was wet up to her knees and her feet where

dirty, sandy and blue- from the cold water, that has left their permeate impression on them.

“Jack and I…went…swimming” Nora managed to get out. Ethel looked at her and Jack up and down through squinted eyes.

“Alright” Ethel said suspiciously “Go up stair and get ready for dinner” Nora nodded and escaped upstairs. When she made it to the top of the stairs she turned to Jack and started to laugh. Then she turned back and walked down the hall until she made it to the bathroom. Jack kissed her on the cheek, then let go of her hand.

Nora had her hand on the handle. “My fathers annual birthday dinner… is there anything more fun” Nora complained sarcastically.

“It won't be so bad. I promise you” he walked to the door of his room, he opened it then disappeared, the door closed with a quiet click. Nora opened her door and went into the bathroom. Nora didn't turn on the light- the sun was on the other side of the house and this was one of the darkest rooms in the house- but she didn't care. Nora turned on the faucet of the bath.

The water started to run, filling the bath slowly. She held her hand under the nozzle and felt the water slowly change from cold to hot. Nora turned and face the mirror her face was paler than usual and her eyes were red. Nora unbuttoned her dress. It fell to her feet, the cold air rushed up to her body, the hair stood up on the back of her neck and goose-bumps started to rise on her arms and legs…

Chapter 11

The Socialite [10] Forever

Chapter Ten

Forever

The sun had set, the moon had risen and the stars where out. Nora was looking into her bedroom mirror putting her in ear ring.

Everything was ready for tonight. The string quartet was here and set up. Mary-Ellen had set the table and was putting the finishing touches on the meal, and everyone was reminiscing in the sitting room.

There was a light knock at the door, and Nora looked past her head in the mirror to see Jack leaning

against the door frame. He was dressed in the evening suite,

The charcoal gray almost black with a fine thin stripe shone a different shade in the bedrooms light.

She turned around and smiled at him.

“You look beautiful” he sighed. Nora looked down her dress that matched hi tie and pin

“You too” she gestured to Jack. She walked foreword and took his arm. They walked out of the room together down the hall till they made to the top of the stairs.

“Are you ready?” he said, Nora looked at him in the eyes and nodded, she put on her best fake smile she could, he leaned into her and whispered “You can do better than that” he joked but with a hint of real sincerity, Nora laughed then started to walk down the stairs. They rounded the corner to the sitting room. Everybody turned to see the couple together. Ethel was leaning down to Annett admiring her bracelet, but stood up slowly when she noticed Nora. “You look lovely Nora darling” she looked at Nora up

and down. Ethel didn't notice Jack until she saw him attached to her arm.

“Oh…” Ethel said “Jack you look nice.” Jack saw her astonishment. She didn't think that they were such a likely pair.

“Thank you Ethel and you to look lovely” he spoke smoothly and calmly.

“I… didn't know that….you …were a ….couple” Ethel was short for words. Was she really that shocked that they would end up together? Or did she just not like it?

“well” She said “dinner is about to be served, so you might want to start moving into the dinning room.” Ethel walked past her towards the doors next to Danielle. Jack leaned into Nora to kiss her on the cheek but she turned her head and kissed him on the lips. Ethel had turned her head and saw, she scowled, then turned and walked through the door.

“Come on” whispered Jack.

“In a minute, I want to wish my dad a happy birthday” she smiled and slipped her arm out of

Jack's. Nora walked foreword to where her father was slowly getting up from his armchair, next to Leroy.

"Dad" She said, she rested her hand on his shoulder. A smile widened on Nora's face. "Happy Birthday" She wrapped her arms around him and hugged him tightly. Edmund smiled back he kissed her on the head.

"Thank-you darling" she let go of him, and turned her head around Jack was still waiting her smiling. She walked back to him, and continued on towards the dinning room. The walked through open doors and moved along the table until they came to the seat with their names on it. Jack's was on the other side of the table at the opposite end next to Samuel Hobart and Nora was place next Audrey his wife. Clearly someone had changed them. Nora had her suspicions about her mother who would have been one of the first to come into the room. but Nora casual leaned down the table and said. "Excuse me Mr. Hobart, but did you want to switch seats so that you can sit next to you wife? " Nora smiled. Samuel beamed "Why

thank-you dear that would be lovely. ” they exchanged place settings , and Nora slipped into her chair next to Jack.

“It feels good to be sitting in a chair that you know you belong in” Nora joked and laughed.

“Gee! I wonder who did that” Jack was getting in on the joke and Nora laughed with him. The was a small clinking sound- someone tapping a glass with a knife- it was Ethel. Once everybody had stopped talking and drew their attention to where the sound was coming from she stood up, she cleared her throat once then started to talk.

“Friends and family, Edmund and I are so glad that you could be here with us to celebrate. It is June again and of course that means Edmunds birthday. It is a tradition that we have adapted of the years and has grown in more ways than one. He is forty-six today, and well as our kids get older I wonder how much longer we will be doing this even though through the years we have gotten some fantastic memories from it. So I think to officially start the celebrations for tonight. I ask you all to charge your

glasses to Edmund Gregory Charles Greenhill” Nora took a hold of her empty glass in front of her and joined in with everyone else chanting Edmunds name. she caught her mothers gaze from the end of the table. It was her turn to give her birthday speech, this years she had forgotten and didn't prepare anything, she franticly leaned into Jack’s ear and said rapidly “What am I going to do I haven't thought of anything to say” her eyes were full of panic. Jack half smiled and whispered into her ear “If you open your heart love opens your mind. Just talk from your heart. It will come to you” Nora felt suddenly comforted by his words. She nodded stiffly, and rose out of her chair. Everyone in the room turn to look at her. They weer staring at her with blank expressions, burning holes into her face. Underneath the table she found jacks hand and took it eagerly, she squeezed it tightly.

“First of all happy birthday dad. I just hope that one day I’ll be forty-six, and be as accomplished as you” she was staring down the table into her fathers eyes, they were lit with joy “Thank-you for everything that you have done for me over the years, I have learned

a lot from you. You taught me that you can't buy love, but you can pay heavily for it…and I think that I inherited that from you, that clear conclusion on my actions and I‘m great full for that , I love you dad” there was a small procession of clapping from that heart warming speech. Nora melting back into her chair next to Jack he was smiling at her mostly through his eyes.

“Thank you” she mouthed at him. He leaned into her and kissed her on the lips, fiercely she locked her arms around his neck and pulled her self closer into him. She almost fell of her chair but she rested her body on Jack knees. When they parted Nora could feel the eyes of everybody in the room on her, when she finally pulled her eyes away from his, nobody was looking they were all talking amongst them selves. Then the kitchen door swung open and Mary-Ellen walked out, carrying for plates, of heavily smelling food. She rested the first four plates in front of Edmund, Ethel, Ted and Martha and retreated quickly to the kitchen to get the next four plates.

Just then the string quartet whom Nora hadn't noticed set up in the entrance hall began to play a slow drifting song, she listened to the song weaving in out of fast breaks grow louder and softer until the song finished then Nora realized she was staring at the wall behind Kimberly's head whom was staring back at Nora suspiciously-thinking that Nora was staring at her-then she caught the scent of something delicious, Braised duck and roasted vegetables… another traditional birthday dinner, and it was Edmunds favourite. Nora picked up her knife and fork and slowly started to eat her dinner.

In no time at all her plate was empty. She didn't realize how hungry she was until she took her first bite, she had not eaten anything since lunch. Jack watched in amazement as she hauled down large quantities of vegetable and duck. But after joining in singing happy birthday to Edmund then eating a larger piece of cake than Jack she finally felt full. People started to file out of the dinning room and into the sitting room for the rest of the night to continue their discussions and smoke cigars…but also for another vital part in the birthday tradition-

the opening of the presents. Nora dashed up stairs to fetch her present, that she got yesterday from town. By the time she was down stairs again every one had assembled in the sitting room around Edmund, who was sitting on an armchair their was a small mound of presents big and small sitting in front of him. Nora walked in and sat her present on the top of the pile and went to stand next to Jack who was standing next to his father by Edmunds side.

Edmund reached out and picked up Nora's present to open first. Nora hoped that her father would like the book it wasn't the best present in the world but it was the though that counted. When he tore of the brown paper his face lit up.

"Les Misérables…I remember the play. Thank you darling" Nora moved into her father and gave him a kiss on the cheek.

The night air was warm and pushing Nora's hair out of her face she was standing on the porch with her arms wrapped around herself leaning against the post at the top of the stairs. Listening to everybody laugh and talk inside. She had come out for some

peace and quite. There was a creak, Nora didn't turn to see who had opened the front door, but she had a good idea. There were soft fingers running through her hair that made her hair stand up on the back of her neck.

“Are you all right?” he asked quietly. Nora nodded, “Fine just wanted peace and quiet” Jack laughed.

“You seem to want a lot of that lately.” he slid his hand down her arm, and took her hand.

“Come” he said pulling away from her walking down the first step. “You definitely won't get Peace and quiet here…you were better off on the jetty”. loud laughter came from the window, Nora’s forehead creased then smoothed out.

“Your right” she admitted , she walked down the steps and let jack lead her down the beach to the jetty.

On the jetty, the moon shone down on them casting o long line of sliver across the water that seemed to dance. The water rippled in the wind that was warm.

Jack held on close to Nora and they stood looking out over the water.

“You were right… this is peace and quite” she kissed him on the cheek.

“Thank you” Nora voice was sincere. “You have given me everything that I wanted… this summer is perfect, and is exactly how I wanted to spend my last summer her with you” Jack turned to face her, and look at her in the eyes.

“Nora this wont be your last time here…you will be coming back” he half smiled, but it was lost in the shadows of the moon.

“I know…but it won't be here…I mean the next time I see stars like this it will be in a different part of the lake” she moved into him and kissed him lightly on the lips.

The music stopped in side, and a new song began, it was slow… Jack extended his hand out and took Nora’s. It was cold compares to his warm hands. He pulled her into his body, he put his arm around her waist, she slide her hand up his arm and rested it on

his shoulder. He stared into her eyes, they glittered brighter than ever before in the moon light. He slowly stepped to the left, and she followed. They moved slowly in a square shape around the jetty, their bodies moved in unison, like they were one. Nora stared back into his eyes, then she moved her body closer to his and rest her head on his chest he dropped her hand and wrapped them around her body, and continued to sway lightly, left, back, right, front, they continued that until the music curled into a slow finish but they didn't stop moving.

“Bother with what?” Nora retorted from earlier today almost scared.

“Pardon?” Jack asked almost shocked Nora and Jack stop dancing and broke apart to look at each other.

“This afternoon you said that if I didn't like the land you wouldn't bother. Bother with what exactly?” Nora asked her voice was starting to shake. She was nervous. What was nervous?

Jack’s face smoothed out and he moved back into Nora re-wrapping his arms around her and started to

move with her but it wasn't as flowing as it was before…Nora was stiff

“Well…” Jack began “ That land is mine. No one else besides you know about that place, and the beach… I’m going to build. You. A house on it.” Nora’s eye flew open, and widened till they couldn't any more Jack smiled then huffed a tiny laugh.

“This is where we met. This is the place where I first saw you… I first loved you, the day that I met you I knew that I wanted to spend the rest of my life with you ” now Jack’s voice was the one that was shaking… “Nora?” he stopped dancing, and where he was standing still holding her hand he bent down onto one knee. Nora eyes bulged out of her head. She realized what was happening. She laughed a smile and looked into Jack eyes waiting.

“Nora Katherine Ann Greenhill…will you marry me” a small tear rose in her eye but she managed to keep it back. She smiled.

“Yes” she said “Yes” she laughed again. She pulled Jack up and through her arms around him. She moved her body closer into his, she rested her cheek

against his shoulder then slowly she moved it up the side of his face until she found his lips, she kissed them lightly, they parted and she breathed into his ear “Forever”

“we will be together forever…” he elaborated.

“Stars?” Nora asked,

“Yes” Jack answered with a smile on his voice.“One day our grandchildren will be looking up into the sky… and we will looking back at them. From the stars.” Jack kissed Nora on the lips. Them started to sway with her to a new song.

The continued to sway together long after the song had finished. They didn't even notice when the quartet and packed up and gone home. But still they continued to move together as one, moving in their world. Right now was their time. To be together in their own time and space.

Sometime past midnight, they finally stopped spinning they looked up into the sky from the jetty. The night was darken then usual. There was no

clouds in the sky, the night was perfect. There was no light coming from the house- a new moon.

It was back again, and Nora knew that their would be a change coming. The last time she remembered seeing a new moon Jack had just come back from Charleston.

But she had a small churning in the bottom of her stomach that she knew wasn't indigestion from dinner- there was a change coming and it wasn't a good one. A kiss from Jack on her lips distracted her form her worries and it never crossed her for-mind for the rest of the night.

Everybody had gone to bed when Nora and Jack finally walked back into the house around one o’clock, he was supporting her up the stairs with his hand under her shoulder keeping her up.

Nora’s night gown was laid out across her bed. Jack folded back her bed while Nora fumbled with getting her night gown over her head, he helped her with her buttons. Nora didn't have any hand-eye coordination when she was tried. Jack laid her down

on her bed and put the covers over her. Her head sunk into her pillow and she closed her eyes.

“Please down go” Nora said unsteadily, her eyes still closed. Jack laughed once, but her knew even when she was on the verge of unconscious he couldn't deny her wishes. He pulled back the doona-cover and got into her bed. He would go to his bed when she was asleep. Nora found his body, she lifted her head and rested it on his chest. Her feet were cold she found his legs and wrapped them around.

Jack didn't have to wait long until Nora’s deep breaths became even then he slipped out of her bed to his room. He closed the door to her room and let her sleep in peace.

The temperature suddenly dropped, Nora became very cold wrapping herself more and more in her blankets like a cocoon.

Her open window let in the frosty air out side the change had come quicker than she thought. Dark clouds closed over the sky trapping the cold air, there was a rumble in the distance, and droplets of water started to fall from the sky.

Change.

Chapter 12

The Socialite [11] Deceitful

Chapter Eleven

Deceitful

Nora didn't sleep well during the rest of the night, the heavy whooshing of the rain and wind hitting the roof made it almost impossible for her to slip into unconsciousness. It didn't fade into the background as she had hoped. Nora tossed and turned, not being able to find a comfortable position. Several times during the night she'd put her pillow over her head then added the quilt. Sometime after midnight, the rain eased into a quite drizzle.

In the morning the sun was lost behind the heavy dark grey clouds of the lousy day that lay in front of Nora. The cold wind blew in through the open bay-window, the curtains thrashed about wildly and the rain drops spattered across the floor, on the timber seat and stained the cushions. Nora turned over in her bed, she squinted her eyes, clenched them tightly together then finally woke to face the day that offered so little. She sat up and the warmth escaped her body quickly. She raised her arms over her head yawned and arched her back. She looked at the open window and moaned. She flipped the covers of her bed, swung around and planted her feet on the hardwood floor. Her night gown fell to her feet as she crossed the floor to the window. The wind blowing in the window had made the floor so cold that it stung her feet, but she didn't care. She walked to the small puddles of water; the wind now blew her hair off her face, the sting of the frosty morning bit at her cheeks. She stared out at the… she had never once seen Lake Wylie like this, and since she had only stayed here during the summer months she never expected it could be this miserable. She was in a parallel

universe, everything was upside down, and she wondered what good could come of this, and she knew that deep-down something bad was about to happen.

The tree tops in the far distance were blowing in unison to the left. The over-hanging clouds were dark and ominous with the threat of heavy rain again. The rough grey lake water seemed to be a violent mirror of the sky just as intimidating; it smashed against the posts of jetty, the boat rocked unevenly in the water, as if it was being played with by a small child, tossed and thrown around-Swallowed, digested, then spat back up- Nora wanted to walk back to bed crawl under the covers, were it was bound to be warm, she left the thought, knowing that wouldn't happen. She leaned over the dampened cushions and closed the window, it clicked, her hair immediately fell to the sides of her face, and the curtains fell down silently. Nora turned and walked out of her room leaving a trail of wet footprints behind her. She closed the door to her room behind her, and began to dry her feet on the carpet of the hallway, rubbing them fiercely, her feet became hot quickly, due to the friction. Just then

the door to Jacks room began to open. Nora fumbled, and started to walk up the hall way. Pretending not to notice his presence.

“Nora.” He called after her. She stopped and turned around. He hurried to her side. He took her hand, leaned in close and kissed her softly on the lips. They parted and Jack breathed “Good morning” the was a smile to his voice, he brushed his free hand through her hair. Nora felt the warmth of his hand in hers, and was sure that he to, noticed the difference in their body temperature. Nora smiled, and said “Good morning”.

Staying close together they walked down stairs, Nora took advantage of the body heat radiating from Jack. She soaked up as mush as she could. They walked to the closed doors of the dinning room were they dropped each others hands, so that they could enter separately. They had not planed to tell their parents of their news until after they got back to Columbia.

Jack pushed the doors open, they creaked then shuttered to a stop, all the heads at the table snapped up to watch them enter. Nora walked forewords in

silence all eyes were on the two of them, they were the last to arrive; breakfast had already been served to those present. Nora immediately took her place on the left hand side of Edmund who was sitting in his usual spot at the head of the table at the end of the room. Jack followed in behind her and sat in the only free chair available, which was in-between, Nora and Danielle March. It was a tight squeeze, fitting in the extra chairs. The dinning room felt more congested, than last night. Nora looked around the table at every face, they all had one similarity. All the eyes had the same dark heaving rings under them; clearly Nora wasn't the only person in the house that had little sleep in the night. Now that she looked, she could see that Jack to-did not succeed in locating much sleep last night either. Maybe it was the light in this room, or Nora’s failed attempt to notice anything, that made her unsuccessful to see it before. Ethel leaned across the table to Nora and said “Good morning darling” Nora nodded once and said half-heartily “Morning” her eye brow twitched she itched it once then let it annoy her. Edmund leaned over the corner. Nora turned her head to her left had Edmund kissed her

on the cheek, his mustached prickled her. She made a face then leaned back to sit up straight. Her knee touched Jacks under the table, instead of flinching away; she left it there, under the table she reached for his hand. He took it eagerly with his thumb he lightly brushed her index finger.

“How did you sleep?” Ethel asked over the laughter coming form the opposite end of the table.

“Fine” Nora lied she knew that she hadn't convinced her mother, she could see it her expression, but she didn't care. Jack leaned in closer to Nora and whispered in her ear “liar” a smile pulled up at the corners of Nora lips. Jack to look around to make sure that nobody was looking at them and swiftly kissed her on the ear. She turned to look Jack in the eyes, she said “She is more of a liar than me, and we both know that. Besides, it’s healthy to lie once in awhile” she shrugged

“Maybe so, but I think otherwise” he whispered back, the leaned across the table to a glass bowl, using a spoon he scooped up a small portion of mixed berries and discarded them on his plate. When he

had what he wanted, he did the same for Nora. She picked a raspberry between her fingers and placed it in her mouth, her teeth crushed it and the flavour ruptured.

“So, without lying, how did you sleep?” he asked her, before tossing a blueberry in his mouth, chewing on it for a minute, savoring the sweetness then swallowing. Never once did he take her eyes of her.

“Alight I guess? I didn't really get to sleep until after midnight” Nora shrugged.

“Huh” Jack huffed “Really? Because, you kept me up all night!” He said suspiciously.

“Pardon me?” Nora said astonished. Jack nodded once “You were talking in your sleep last night!” Jack explained to Nora, she turned her head away from him, and focused her gaze on the unpleasant day outside the window behind her fathers head. “And believe me” continuing on, knowing that she was listening “It’s not the only time you have.” Jack finished and Nora turned back to face him, he looked closely to her changed of expression. It was a mixture- her cheeks, red with blood from

embracement. Her eyes were confused, and her lips pressed into a hard line with anger.

“What do I say?” Nora demanded as quietly as she could, but keeping her voice firm and unbroken. Jack’s returning expression was smooth and warm.

“You say you love me- most days” he kept his lukewarm smiled on his face, it seem to heat the room up, and Nora forgot the bitter temperature.

“What? Do I sometimes say I hate you?” Nora asked nervously. Jack shook his head as soon as the last words had escaped his lips.

“No, no, no” he said “But sometime you just say things that don't make sense. But last night you were louder than usual, and there was something different about the tone in your voice. I went into check on you; you were having a bad dream, in think?” Jack studied Nora expressions,

“Did you?” he repeated. Nora shuffled through her thoughts, but could find no recollection to a dream. She looked down at her legs, then up staring into Jack’s eyes.

“I can't remember” she said, Jack could read the true sincerity in her voice and eyes. He nodded, and even though Nora was telling the truth she could tell that Jack was not.

“What did I say last night” she whispered to him, he looked down and the possibilities flooded Nora’s mind. She yeaned to know what she had dreamed about last night, she reached out a took hold of his hands.

“You don't have to tell me Jack...But you can trust me.” She half smiled and he returned it.

“If you can't remember… Then, I’d rather not tell you” he said intensely Nora looking into his eye nodded in agreement. If it was that bad then in the end she wasn't sure if she wanted know, she tore she gaze away from his to notice that the room was nearly empty. What could the day offer to have every trotting off to get ready for? Only Jim, Annett, Leroy and Kimberly were still chit- chatting over there empty plates and Nora realized that she had not eaten anything besides a raspberry, she picked a strawberry and threw it into her mouth, she chewed

it, and then her appetite came back quickly. She started to toss two-three berries in at a time the swallowing them without properly chewing on them. Jack laughed.

“Why don't you stay here and eat some breakfast” he stood from his seat and placed Nora’s hand down on the table. “I’ve got to go get ready anyway” he kissed her on the forehead.

“Where is everyone going? Its not like there is anything to do around here today” Nora moaned, Jack laughed again “You wouldn't want to come not for girls- men only”

“Men?” Nora started to choke on the strawberry in her throat. Jack grimaced “Males” he said again. “Well were you going?” Nora asked “maybe I’ll want to come?” “Hunting” Jack replied “You want to come?” Nora screwed up her face and Jack laughed.

“What are you hunting?” Nora asked

“Whatever we can find.” He replied

“But today is so miserable can't you go another day?” Nora asked her question were annoying Jack slightly.

But to hear her voice, would mean to hear her say anything.

“You know that it is tradition to go hunting after you fathers birthday. Have you forgot?” he said mockingly

“Yes” Nora admitted picking up another berry, and putting it in her mouth

“Stay, eat, be warm, I’ll see you this afternoon” Jack said, he bent down, kissed her on the lips, then walked out to the dinning room and disappeared.

Nora stared at the door long after he was gone, she turned in her seat, she saw that her plate was bare of the berries, she reached out and picked up the whole bowl and sat it in front of her and began picking out of it.

When she had eaten all the strawberries she moved onto the raspberries, she got half- way through then her stomach started to feel full. Nora got up from her seat, and walked slowly out of the dinning room up the stairs and into her room to put her clothes on for the day.

* * *

To pass the time during the day after Nora had gotten dressed -in a light mint-green dress with white flowers- she told Mary-Ellen to go and do something else. Nora made her own bed and cleaned her room herself just for something to do.

She sat by the bay-window her head was resting against the cold glass, the rain had picked up again and little droplets ran down the pane. Her breath fogged the glass, she wanted to fill in the time, do something… but nothing came to her mind. She couldn't be expected to be kept inside all day. She let her thoughts wander, she thought about what she'd wear to her wedding, where and when it would be, she thought about how she would tell her mother, and what she would say. She closed her eyes and visualized the conversation in her head.

"Mom" she would start "I know that you think that Benjamin is best for me. You think that he will provide for me because he has the money. But I'm going to marry Jack. love him more than anything,

and he loves me. And he has the money, and he will provide.”

“Honey” Ethel would reply “I didn't know you felt that way, but if it is what you want” Nora knew that what she was imagining was never going to happening and that she was only picturing what she wanted her mother to say.

Then there was a brief flash through her alterative happy ending. She ignored it and continued to imagine. What her mother would say after that.

“And… where are you going to liv-” Her mothers imagined words were cut of by brief flickers becoming longer and longer. Images that Nora couldn't see properly, because they flashed past to quickly for her to notice anything, these pictures grew more and more familiar; Nora had the feeling of déjà vu like she’d seen all this before…but none of it had happened recently see knew it from some where else, she knew it. It was her dream that she had left behind as soon as she awakened this morning. She tried to pay as much attention to the pictures as they speed past, but the more she

concentrated on them the more they slowed down and became clearer. The images stopped everything went blank, Nora remembered her dream, and replayed in her head, to try to think of what Jack was implying this morning.

Nora was standing on the jetty, in a white dress, her hair and dress was being pushed back by the light, warm air, and the sun radiated off her skin. She watched the water ripple flippantly. There was a soft touch to her right shoulder she smiled and turned around to face Jack, she wrapped her arms around his neck she kissed him lightly on the lips, they parted and she smiled at him. She rested her head on his chest and closed her eyes.

Then everything went black, the sun disappeared behind the clouds, the sky closed in. Nora felt the temperature drop; she tightened her grip around Jack. Then her arms dropped to their sides she looked up puzzled. Jack was walking away swiftly, Nora started to follow him. He stepped off the jetty, but he didn't turn to walk to the house, he turned and walked into the forest.

“Jack” Nora called but he didn't turn around “Come back!” Nora followed Jack into the forest until the house was no longer visible. Nora tried to catch up, but he was walking to fast, never once breaking stride. Nora continued to shout after him but he couldn't hear her. Jack walked behind a tree, Nora was several steps behind. when she made it to the tree, Jack was nowhere to be seen. The tree was in the middle of a clearing, and Jack was gone.

“Jack” Nora said starting to panic, she turned her head quickly back and forth looking for him; she squinted into the bushes on the far side of the clearing.

“Don't leave me” She shouted, up to the sky as if he would hear it no matter where he was. Her eyes began to weld up with tears; there was a cold gush of wind that swept through the clearing.

“You can't” Nora whimpered, looking down at the ground away from the sky. The tears began to spill over. She knelt down and curled herself up at the bottom of the tree, her knees pulled up to her chest

arm wrapped around them. She started to rock herself.

“You promised” she cried “Come back” her tears blotted her cheeks. The wind shook the tree and it creaked, thunder cracked over-head. Light rain began to fall.

“Come back” Nora repeated over and over “Come back, come back. Please” she laid her head down at the bottom of the tree resting it on a large tree root sticking out of the ground. Nora lay on ground waiting for Jack to come, But he didn't, He was gone; Nora knew it but refused to expect it.

Nora opened her eyes-facing reality- she realized that she was laying down, in the same position that she was in her dream. Arms wrapped around her legs that where pulled up to her chest, tear stained cheeks. She sat up right, snuffled and wiped her eyes. She sat there idle looking at the floor, her mind was flooded with images of her dream that she thought that she’d forgotten, she wasn't able to think about anything else. The door creaked open and Nora snapped her head up. Jack was standing in the

doorway; his perfect blond hair wet and dripping down his face, his cloths drenched and sagging off him. He instantly noticed her puffy red eyes and tear blotchy cheeks. He hurried over to her and stopped a few feet in front of her. Nora stood up, standing only inches from his face, her breathing became suddenly ragged and there was a dry stabbing pain in her throat. She fell forward on to Jack; he caught her and held her close to his chest. Nora started to cry again.

“I remember” she said weeping. “I remember” Jack pressed his cheek into her hair, his left hand stroke through her curls. “You left. Jack you left, why would do that?”

“Shh” He said “It was just a dream” he lifted his head and rested his chin on hair, he looked out the window.

“But, you left. You left me” she cried out. Jack pulled her off him and held her in his arms, he looked at her.

“It was a dream” he said, dropping his hands from her shoulders he slid his right hand down her arm, and holding her hand he led her over to the bed, and

sat down tugging her next to him. “I’m right here” he held her hand up to his chest, Nora could feel his heart beat under her fingers. Jack continued “I’m not going anywhere. Nora you never have to be afraid of that because no matter where I am in the world you will be there with me, we will be together always, no matter what our parents say. Don't let this dream get to you; it was a dream, not real, made up. In your head, so don't dwell on it. You feel this” Jack nodded his head to where Nora was feeling his heart beat. “You say that you have always felt this heart beat. This heart beats because of you. You will always feel it beat, I promise you, and I will love you till the day that this heart stops beating. Don't remember that dream, but remember what I’m telling you now,

This heart -my heart- belongs to you, it’s yours” Jack smiled, Nora could hear the sincerity in his voice, she could hear the beautiful curl to his words, and she knew that it was him, and not a dream, she wasn't imaging him. This was actually happening; Nora’s memories of Jack never did him justice for what he truly looked like to her. He loved her, and she loved him.

Nora gasped. “I feel it.” She breathed. Jack nodded “Always. I will always love you, and this heart will still beat because of that, it will always belong to you”.

Nora smiled and gasped again “I will always keep that heart beating I promise. I keep your heart beating and you give my life meaning. Without you I’d have no choice but to conform, you let me see the choices, and show me my options, and help to decides things for myself. I may keep you alive but you guide me. You’re an angle to me, you bought me out of the dark, and you showed me the light”

“I love you” Jack breathed leaning in closer to Nora

“Always” She replied, then with her hand still on his heart she leaned in and kissed him. They parted and Nora wrinkled her nose. “Where have you been you smell disgusting” Giggle escaped her lips, Jack laughed with her

“Sorry” Jack blushed “I’ll go clean up” he stood still holding Nora’s hand to his heart; Nora nodded “Good idea” she grimaced.

“I’ll be right back” Jack lightly let Nora hand fall form his chest, then walked swiftly from the room. Nora fell back onto the bed, her mind was swimming in a lake of things to comprehend, and her mind repeatedly went over what Jack said

‘This heart -my heart- belongs to you; it’s yours’ Nora liked the thought of that and whished that she had said something similar, but she thought in the back of her mind what she had said to him was reassurance enough. She sat on the bed idle twiddling with her fingers, she did as Jack said and forgot about the bad dream- in fact she saw it as a good thing, it had gotten Jack to express his true feelings, and now she only saw the good things that lie ahead for her. The rain hitting the roof wasn't loud enough to drown out the sound of the phone ringing downstairs, she listen to ring once, then a third and forth time, she heard her mothers light footsteps hurrying to get the phone. She heard the phone ring cut of mid-way through the fifth ring. The rain suddenly picked up harder and drowned out her conversation. Nora strained her ears to hear but couldn't make out anything other than poring rain, and thunder cracks

in the distance. When the rain fainted down to a drizzle, the voices downstairs where much clearer, what they were talking about Nora was oblivious too, but she thought that it some how was linked o the phone call.

“Well that’s fantastic”

“No surprise there she had always been so smart”

“I knew she would get it”

“When dose she leave?”

Nora’s was curious; she got up and walked down stairs. When she was at the bottom she stopped around the corner, making her eavesdropping much easier

“In one week” Ethel’s voice came. Nora was suddenly clear on what they were talking about. Her. She fumed but straightened out her face, to seem unaware, so that she could get all the facts. When she turned the corner she noticed that half the people in the room where sitting and half where standing, but their attention was directed to Ethel- who turned slowly to face Nora with a crooked smile on her face,

the smile made Nora smile churn, and she back into the wall, making a painting above her head shake.

“What’s going on?” she took a deep breath and gulped. She feeling around Nora, was making it hard for her to breath, she could feel that what was coming what going to make her world fall apart. Was she not allowed to be happy in life at all? Ethel walked foreword, her crooked smiled modified into a grin “Honey, you got into Sarah Lawrence, congratulations” It took a minute to register what Ethel had said In Nora mind

“Honey, you got into Sarah Lawrence, congratulations” her eyes were staring blankly in front of her, finally she looked up to her mother, who was standing over her now on her right side, she gave Nora an awkward one armed hug. Now she was staring at her mother.

“I…don't… understand, I didn't apply to Sarah Lawrence” Nora studded “I’m going to the University of South Carolina” her expression was perplexed, but Ethel just chuckled “My dear, I know that you didn't apply. I did for you” her hands were resting firm on

her shoulders. Nora was furious at her mother's words; she shook Ethel's hands of her shoulders and took a step away from her mom.

"You did what?" Nora demanded.

"Well honey" Ethel folded her hands together "I wanted to keep your options open"

"What options" Nora spat through her teeth "I have already been accepted to University of South Carolina" Ethel stepped foreword closing the gap between her and Nora

"No honey, you're going to Sarah Lawrence, it's a much better facility, and we have already found a house in Bronxville, as close to campus as we could find" she smirked

"Mom I'm not moving New York, I chose the University of South Carolina because it's close to home, and it's close to Jack, he's been expected there too. Where going there together" Nora completely ignored the audience in the room.

"I'm not going" She walked pass her mother making sure that her shoulder hit her mothers.

“Yes, you are” Ethel said, hard and firm. She reached out and grabbed Nora by the elbow before she could leave the room, and spun her around.

“No, I’m not” Nora raised her voice trying to free her arm.

“We are leaving on friday, we have to be in Bronxville- New York, by the end of next week” she surrendered to her daughter and dropped her hand.

“But the new school year hasn't even started” Nora face screwed up with confusion and anger.

“No. But you’re in the advance placement program” Ethel tried not to sound to flustered.

“Are you kidding?” Nora’s brows raised.

“No. neither should you, this is a wonderful opportunity, they don't hand them out to anybody, and they are special offers for those academically advanced”

“I’m only academically advanced because you made me this way” Nora had snapped and all her repressed feeling over the last sixteen years and

started to pour out of her mouth “But do you even care about what I think, do you even know what my interests are. No, because you won't take the time of day to even ask. Do you know what I like to do for fun?”

“You dance, I know that”

“Do you even know why I dance? Do you?” Nora shouted.

“I tell you why because when I dance I forget what I’m doing, I forget everything. I’m free. But you don't know that I hurt the way a do because you don't really know me”

“I think we need to have a little chat- just you and me” Ethel hissed in Nora ear, she grabbed Nora again by the elbow and dragged her behind herself toward the dinning room. Her footsteps where heavy and echoed loudly in the front room, once inside the dinning room she released Nora and tuned and closed the two doors. She swung around to Nora and said louder than necessary “What is your problem?”

“Why did you apply me to Sarah Lawrence? You know that I’m going to the University of South Carolina” Nora snapped Back already having thought of what she would say to her mother.

“Because…we have talked about Sarah Lawrence since you were nine” Ethel retorted walking around Nora.

“So” Nora said hastily “Mom I can make my own decisions, I know what is best for me, ok. I know what side of the train tracks to walk on”

“I can't just let you go off with him” Ethel said the words with distaste

“Him? Him? He has a name. And besides what is wrong with him, I love him?” Nora’s voice was on edge.

“Honey you don't know what love is” Ethel moved foreword to Nora, but she moved back, away from her mother. Nora felt betrayed by her mother. She had always counted on her to back-her-up in certain situations, and now she was being let down.

“Why don't you want us to be together? Because you think he isn't right for me. And you think Benjamin is?” Nora exploded on the last sentence, and said Benjamin’s name with the same distaste that Ethel’s used when referring to Jack.

“Yes, that is exactly what I think” Ethel admitted, Nora felt a some form of closure, but wasn't fully satisfied.

“You don't want me to be happy do you?” Nora faced screwed up with disappointment.

“No. Nora, that’s not tru-” Nora cut her off, she was angry now “Yes it is” she said in a shrill tone.

“Nora, what dose he have to offer you?” Ethel’s brows creased

“Everything. His love” the sincerity was ringing in her voice “Should the rest even matter”

“Yes, it dose. Where are you even going to live when you do get married?”

Nora’s mind was scattered, but at least she had an answer for her mother. “Jack… Jack is going to build me a house.”

“That’s convenient” Ethel scoffed

“Well it is. Jack said so last night. He has the place and the money for it already. Money…Money…. Is this all about money? Benjamin has plenty of it sure. But he isn't for me. You do know that Jack comes from money.”

“Nora you can't give this up. Think about all that I have done for you” Ethel was starting to get defensive.

“Why did you tell me that Jack had gone to Chicago?” Nora finally scratched the top of something that she had been meaning to ask her mother in three years.

“Ahh… Nora don't change the subject” Ethel moaned

“Tell me!” Nora shouted at her “Tell me”

“Because when you were with him you had you head in the clouds” Ethel stated

“No. That’s a lie” Nora denied, not believing the first thing that came out of her mother mouth, but the closure that wasn't there before suddenly was, after eleven year of wondering she had finally gotten the truth out of her mother.

“You just didn't want to see me happy did you? Did you?” Nora’s voice had gone dry “Well you know what. I don't care any more I made up my mind last night. And I’m going to spend the rest of my life with him. I’m going to marry Jac-”

“No you are not” Ethel cut her, and spat the word to her through her teeth.

“You know what, you don't make up the decisions for me anymore. You gave up that right when you lied to me” Nora’s voice was cold. She took one last look at her mother and headed for the door.

“Nora” Ethel called after her. Nora’s hand was resting on the door handle. She looked back her lips pressed into a hard line, both brows were raised.

“I…I…I wasn't lying to you. I was protecting you” Nora’s grip tightened on the handle, she clench her

teeth together and swallowed back the bile the rose in her mouth. Bought on by her mothers words. Nora scowled at her mother and swiftly left the room. When she was out, she closed the door louder then necessary. She pivoted on her feet and slammed her back against the door. Nora was panting fast, drawing in short ragged breaths. Her mind was replaying her mothers last words.

“I was protecting you” protecting her from what? Nora couldn't understand whats her mother was referring to. Protecting her from what? Love? Happiness? Jack? The University of South Carolina?

Nora kept her eyes down at the floor, someone in the sitting room coughed, and Nora snapped her head up. Everyone in the room was looking at her with no readable expression on her face. They had clearly heard everything. Nora forced her body in to the door handle, it agonized but Nora used that pain to burn back spiteful words that she was sure she would yell at the fifteen people in the sitting room. There was a creak, Nora turned her head in the direction of the stairs where it came from. Jack was

standing on the second step. Nora hadn't seen him there. He must have herd the whole conversation, his left hand was rested lightly on the rail and his right sat idle by his side. Nora’s eyes- at the sight of him- started to fill with tears that she couldn't blink back, a big dry lump rose in her throat as she tried to avoid shedding on tear, but it was hopeless. One small, salty tear fell from Nora’s eye and onto her cheek, leaving behind a wet trail as it ran down the side of her face to the bottom of her chin, where it dangled, then fell to the ground. Nora ran to the door, she hastily turned the handle, fumbling with it repeatedly, but finally opened it. The rain outside hadn't seized but Nora didn't care. She ran across the porch, her footsteps echoed, then down the steps, she stumbled on the last one but straighten her self out and started running up the beach. Her feet sunk into the ground. The ran that fell on her wasn't falling heavily enough to soak her through too quickly.

“Nora!” Jack called from somewhere behind her, Nora didn't turn around to see if he was coming after her. She ran into the trees of the forest and disappeared from sight of the house. She slowed to a

walk, her feet were cold and hurting. she stepped on a twig, it cracked and drowned out the sound of the rain for half a second. It was easy for her to ignored the physical pain in her foot, as it was nothing compared to the emotional pain that engulfed her. Tears poured down her face and fell on her already water spatted dress. She stopped by the trunk of a spruce, tall from its many years. She extended her arm and touched the bark on the trunk, it was rough under her fingertips.

She wished that she could have been a tree. Lively freely, growing constantly, swaying in breeze. Never having a worry in the world. Nora fell to the ground. The forest floor was on a little damp, not much rain water made it past the dense canopy. She pulled her knees up to her chest, wrapped her arms around them and buried her head.

What had bought on this behaviour? Was it her farther? Not even. Her mother? Most likely? Or Jack? It was Jack. Nora knew it was. When she saw him standing on that step she saw everything that ever mattered to her. Love . Life. Happiness. She had all

that, and it was because of Jack that she did. He gave her life, and reason to live. But now she had to leave him. And she didn't know when the would see again - weather it would be in three years or thirty- or even if she would see him ever again. She saw everything and everything that she would have to leave behind in four days to come, she wished she could have longer with him- it wouldn‘t be enough time to say good bye. No time in the world would be enough, and she couldn't deal with that. It was to much for her to take.

She heard approaching footsteps, someone coming closer. The sound of crunching stones and snapping twigs was getting louder. Jack appeared from behind a hemlock, he was walking slowly, closer to Nora. She kept her face buried. He stopped in front of her and breathed deeply.

“Nora” he said quietly, Nora slowly lifted her head. Jack was standing over her. She started with his feet working her way up to his face. That would be that hardest for her to comprehend- they were bare like hers, dirty and a strange shade of purple-blue, which

was probably caused by the low temperature. Slowly moving up his legs, his pants were on very lightly spattered from rain. His fresh clothes already wet. What a waist of a shower. She slowly came to his face. It was easier and harder for Nora to look at him than she thought.

It was easier because he wasn't angry like she thought he‘d be. But why should be have been angry? She hadn't done anything wrong.

It was harder because she couldn't’t bear to look at him knowing now that their time together was strictly limited. When she thought that they would have forever. Jack’s hair was damp and hanging down his face. He extended a hand; Nora looked at it then reached out and took it. He easily lifted her up and into his arms. When she was just centimetres from his face she finally looked back into his eyes. No words had to be said. They were talking through their eyes. Reading each others expressions. And looking upon the one thing that they couldn't be without. Nora rested both hands on Jack’s chest; he wrapped his arms around her and pulled her in

closer. Nora rested her forehead on his chin and sighed deeply.

“What are we going to do? She moaned, Jack hushed her and rubbed her back.

“It will be all right” He whispered in to her hair, and kissed her.

“No Jack” Nora said, pulling away from him to look into his eyes “It won't be”

“We‘ll figure it out” he pulled her back into him, she pressed her cheek against his chest and listened to the even beat of his heart.

“I don't want to loose you again” Nora whimpered. With Nora still in his arms, Jack moved over to the tree trunk and knelt down cradling her in his arms.

“What are you afraid about?” he asked. Nora thought over her answer. She didn't want to answer. She did want to mention what she was afraid of. But she knew that she couldn't hide it well, that she could lie. A lie would do no good now. As Nora saw her mother demonstraight it caused pain to the people you were lying to. Jack had seen everything in her eyes, had

read everything. If she did lie he would know. Why did he have to read her fear the in her eyes.? Why did she have to be so predicable and easy to read? Nora looked straight ahead to a tree trunk in front of her. She didn't want to look Jack in the eye when she confessed to him.

“Losing you. I had once before and I almost forgot you completely. I don't want that to happen again” Nora let out a deep breath that she had been holding. Her heart was racing, thudding in her ears.

“It won't” Jack sighed “you‘re mine till the day I die. That is what you promised me. Nora Katherine Ann Greenhill”-Jack had never used reference of Nora’s middle name before- “I will never forget and I know that you will never forget me. What happened before doesn't matter you were young chose to forget-”

Nora cut him off and mumbled under her breath “I didn't chose to forget. Someone chose foe me.” -she raised the sound of her voice -“Jack I feel like the world doesn't want us to be together-”

“Its not the world against us” Jack laughed “It‘s your mother” -Nora screwed up her nose in reference to her mother- “She only wants the best for you”

“I know, but she doesn't consider my feelings or values she only cares about Sarah Lawrence”

“Nora” Jack said quietly. Nora looked up to him, but he wasn't staring back at her like he always was. Instead he was looking forward to the tree that Nora was looking at before.

“I…I think” Jack talked slowly “You should go… to Sarah Lawrence” he bit down on his bottom lip. His words were hard for him to say. Nora could feel a dry lump rise in her throat. What was he saying? Did he know what he was saying? It didn't make any sense. Last night he promised her that they would be together forever. Now he was telling her to go.

“What?” Nora choked out. “You want me to go? Did I do something wrong? Do you not love me anymore-”

“No. No.” Jack cut Nora off “No Nora it‘s not you. I love you. You haven't cone anything wrong. But I want you to go. Your mother is right. You should go.”

the pain was clear in his eyes, and his voice. This was hurting him more than Nora could read on his expression.

“Your mother is right” he repeated again.

“Stop!” Nora screamed, she forced her self out of Jack’s arms to look at him in the face. “Stop saying that. She is not right”

“She is Nora” Jack said calmly

“No! you don't know what you are saying. You want me to go away. To leave you.” tears started to pour out of her eyes and down her cheeks. Jack leaned forward and wiped away the tear with his shirt sleeve.

“Don't cry Nora” He tried to sooth her.

“You want me to go” Nora whimpered

“Never” Jack said pulling Nora back into his arms. He kissed her hair.

“But your mother is right.”

“Ah!” Nora screamed “why do you keep saying that?” again pulling her self out of Jacks arms.

“Nora listen to me. Hear me out.” he extended his hand and touched it lightly to Nora she didn't flinch away. “Thank-you” he breathed. It was a sign, showing him that she would hear him out.

“I never wanted to but apart from you. The way that you don't want to be apart from me, but this just has to happen. This is a great opportunity for you, like your mother said… an I want you to take it. Go. You‘ve worked to hard not to.” he rubbed his fingers over her hand. And whipped one last tear that feel from her eye away.

“I don't want to go… I don't want to leave you…” Nora whispered “ And I don't care if that means giving up Sarah Lawrence-”

“But Nora it‘s your dream. You have be talking about going to Sarah Lawrence since you were nine” Jack said

“I know.” Nora whispered “ It used to be my dream. But it isn't anymore. Besides. You turned down Dartmouth. Can't I do the same?”

“I turned down Dartmouth, because it was not the place for me” Jack snapped back at Nora in defence.

“And Sarah Lawrence isn't the place for me-”

“But it is Nora don't you understand. You belong there. You suite your role. I don't”

“Jack I don't want to be anywhere that you aren't. I don't want to spend three years away from you. Sarah Lawrence is in New York. That is five states away from here-

“Four. Technically right now we are in North Carolina” Nora grimaced at him, he kissed her on the forehead and took her hand and place it on his chest. Nora could feel the even beat of his heart under her fingers.

“Nora do you remember what I said to you that day. My family cam back to Columbia? I said that I ‘never forgot you’ ” Nora nodded, she remembered that night in April three years ago.

“Well think about what I said to you not even and hour ago” he tapped her hand under his “My heart belongs to you.” he breathed. “Nothing will ear us

apart.- physically but never in soul, spirit or mind. We‘ll be together always. We have been apart for longer once before. I haven't asked you for much- besides my hand in marriage- which you agreed to. But now I am asking you for a favour. Go to Sarah Lawrence. Not for your mom but for me.- and when this is all over you and I will be together” Nora slowly dropped her hand. She leant down to jacks lying on top of him on her stomach. She leaned up as far as she could not quite making the distance to Jacks lips. He bent down filling in the distance between them, he kissed her lightly of the lips. When they parted Nora stayed laying on top of Jack hugging him closely.

Nora and Jack stayed out in the forest until the forest changed from light gray. To dark smoking gray, almost black. Somewhere behind the clouds the sun was setting.

They talked about the gloomy days to come, Jack didn't want to the discussion to be about sad things, so when Nora would start to complain. Jack would do his best to change the subject. Using words like-

diamond rings, White doves and wedding cake. He would repeatedly bring up small details on their lake house- to-be. But he wouldn't give away all the house plans to Nora that would spoil his surprise for the first time she saw it. He tried as hard as he could to avoid any conversation ending with Sarah Lawrence, but Nora did her best to make sure that it did. As mush as Nora didn't want to, Jack didn't want her to either but he knew that it was going to value her, and open up many doors for her as possible. She would get the best education there was for young ladies in America and jack would just have to put up with his average education at the University of South Carolina learning things that he already knew.

They walked back to the house with their arms around each other. The bottom of their cloths were damp and dirty, but neither of them really cared.

“We‘ll just have to fill in for time now” Nora joked sarcastically.

“Well, we have…” Jack added up in his head “four days and seventeen hours until you go” He smiled weakly. Though he had convinced her to go he

detested it as much as she did. But he kept reminding himself that it was the best for her. It they would be apart, and he wasn't prepared for it, just like she wasn't. Nora leaned up and kissed him on the lips. The ground beneath their feet as they came into view of the house and made the change from forest to beach.

They slowed their walk. Trying to stall re-entering the house. The low gray were in various shade now instead of the same, and the rain had subsided to a light mist that sand beneath their feet scratched as they walked up the stairs. Nora tried to keep her footsteps light but didn't succeed. They approached the door, Jack extended his hand when he touched the handle he stopped and turned to Nora “Are you alright” he asked Bora took a deep breath and nodded solemnly. She held her breath. And listened to her heart beat experientially in her ears. Jack turned the handle, the door creaked open. Jack stepped inside, Nora stood frozen on the other side if the door. She wasn't moving. still. Jack leaned close and whispered into her ear.

“You don't have be afraid. I‘m here. With you . Now. Take control and stand up for yourself ” he took her hand and squeezed it tightly. Nora rigidly moved through the front door, then halted to a stop at the sight of her mother. Standing on the first step of the staircase. One-down from where Jack had stood. Ethel glared at Nora through cold hateful eyes. Nora stumbled back from her mother scared, but then realized. She could run far away but get nowhere. Fight as hard as she could but never win. Because who was she running from or fighting against? It was only her mother… and Nora felt no longer scared but strong. She knew that she could stand up for herself, and fight for what she believed. But fighting against her mother was a lost cause. But the sooner that all of this is over and behind her Nora won't have to fight against her mother anymore. She could go off with Jack and lead her own life, in her own house with her own rules. Rules that she would make carefully. Because Nora would never want to make the same mistakes that her mother did, with her own child. She would give her child the very best, just like her mother did. But she would not force it on her

child, but let her child make and learn from their mistakes, and grow up the normal way.

Ethel stood on the step for several long minutes. Nora had expected her to say something but instead, Ethel stepped down and walked silently to the sitting room without looking back at Nora. Nora let go of Jack's hand and walked swiftly into the sitting room her mother was carelessly turning the pages of a book. Not noticing her daughter. Ignoring her as if were a whisper in the wind.

"I'll go" Nora said standing by the side of her mothers chair "But I want you to know, I'm not going for you. I'm going for him" Nora turned her head up to Jack who was leaning against the door frame " and because the boy I love the most in the world convinced to go, alright! I'm going because he convinced me. Not you who is forcing this upon against my will. I am going. Not for you, but for him. And I want you to also know that I will never forgive you for this" one small tear ran down the side of Ethel's face as she pretended to read her book. Nora's

lips where pressed together and she walked to where Jack was standing at the door.

“I‘m proud of you” he whispered. And kissed her on the head.

“Thanks” Nora breathed “I’m giving her what she wants. She deserved the truth from me... After all it is her dream. Not mine.” Nora in a flat voice staring at her mother from the door way break into a silent stream of tears. She took one last glance at her mother then turned and walked up the stairs and into her room with Jack right behind her.

Dinner that night was a quiet affair. The whole room was silent, no one was talking and the only sound was the sound was knifes and forks scratching plates. Only once of twice would anyone having a two or three worded conversation then the room would fall into silence again. Ethel sat across from Nora as she always did on the left-hand side of Edmund, gawking at Nora in regular intervals, but would only fake looking at her plate and staring at some other part of the room when Nora would catch her.

Jack felt oddly in the middle of this silently feud, once or twice Ethel would change from glaring at Nora to Jack. He would usually catch her after a few short moments. then she would subtly look down at her plate. Only the glare back at him when she was sure he was looking away.

As the night went on more and more people floatted out of the dinning room- to get away from the awkwardness- to either their room for the night or the sitting room, to read, crochet or attempt starting small talk. When Jack, Nora, Ethel and Edmund where the only ones left, a heavier silence fell. Jack was trying to start a conversation with Edmund about school. While Nora and Ethel sat in silence glaring at each, talking through their eyes.

Jack stood up his chair screeched against the floor. “Well I’m going to call it a night” he bent down to Nora and whispered in her ear “I‘ll wait up for you” he kissed her on the cheek lightly then left the room. Nora looked at the door long after he left, she was deep in thought when her fathers unsubtle cough

caught her attention. She slowly turned her head to her father, and half smiled.

“So ah… your mother informed me this afternoon that you have agreed to marry Jack” Nora studied her fathers expression.

“Yes” Nora said curiously. She couldn't pick out her fathers expression, it was blank.

A smile rose on his face. “Congratulations” he exploded.

Ethel slammed her hand down on the table and said “Exactly. Wait what?”

“My little princess is getting married. I couldn't be happier.” he stood up quickly, and gave Nora an awkward one armed hug. Nora still hadn't got her head around it. Her father approved.

“Really?” Nora whispered. Edmund nodded and smiled, he laughed. A smile came to her lips “ Really?” she laughed with him, she stood up from her chair. And hugged him tightly.

“No!” Ethel screamed. “What are you talking about?”

“I‘m happy Ethel. My baby girl has found love.”

“Love? Love? Edmund. She is eighteen. She doesn't know what love is!” Ethel stood up from her chair. Nora turned to her mother her smile faded.

“What?” Nora sounded disgusted “I don't know love. What about you. You don't look at dad the way I look at Jack. There is no love in your eyes.” Nora moved over to Ethel.

“Jesus Christ Nora. You are not marrying him” Ethel looked over Nora shoulder to Edmund. “I thought that you would at least back me up.” she scowled at him

“Ethel our girl has found love I am not going to stand in her way. She wants to marry this fine young man, then I‘m happy for her. We aren't going to make the same mistake that our parents did. We are going to give her a choice. Not force it on her” Edmunds defence left Ethel gutted. She couldn't believe that Edmund would defend Nora with her arranged marriage made by her parents.

“Mom it‘s the modern day now. People don't have arranged marriages anymore. It‘s more about love. And I certainly don't need love advice from you” Ethel snapped, she swung out her hand and it made contact with Nora’s left cheek. Nora was shocked at her mother. Ethel was panting fast. Edmund walked up to Nora and put his arms around her. He pulled her a few steps away from her mother.

“Sorry” Ethel said her breath was becoming was ragged.

“No” Nora said “no” she was fighting her fathers hold, she wanted to be free “you don't get apologise anymore. You are already taking me away from Jack. I‘m going to Sarah Lawrence. Aren't you happy enough with that!” Edmund gave up fighting against Nora’s struggle he let his hands drop. Nora didn't retaliate like he thought she would. Instead. She just stood there looking at her mother. “I hope you‘re happy” she said, not looking at her mother once more she walked to the door and left the dinning room. Nora walked straight up the stairs, down the hall to her room. When she was inside Jack was

already lying on her bed, reading a book. She half smiled and walked straight to her bed. She sat down and touched her cheek where her mother had slapped her. It tingled and felt liked there was a permeate handprint.

“Are you ok?” he asked he touched her on the left shoulder, his hand was warm, she slid her hand down her cheek and touched his hand. Nora breathed deeply and nodded

“Did you hear anything?” Nora’s voice was shaking with stress that she failed to hide from Jack

“I don't think there is anyone in this house that didn't hear” there was a smile in Jacks voice. Nora’s laughed once then fell back on her bed. Jack tossed his book and it landed on the floor with a thud. Nora laid her head down on Jacks stomach. He kissed her on the head. And stroke his fingers through her hair. Nora felt around her bed until her hand touched her night gown. She sat up, and slid it over her head until it fell to her thighs. She stood up and let it fall to her ankles, then she resumed her position by his stomach, and he continued to stoke her hair. Nora

sighed and looked at the roof, and pulled her feet up onto the bed. Jack slid his arm under hers and closed them around her chest and pulled her up higher on the bed. She turned over on her stomach to look at him in the eyes, he was staring back at her-of course-with her favourite crooked smile. She leaned up and kissed him on the lips, they were warm and soft. She moved off him to lay by his side she kissed his ear and whispered “I love you” his smile widened and turned on his side to look into her eyes.

“Me too” he replied. “I have something for you” he said sitting up , he leaned over to Nora and pulled out a small blue box from the pillow behind her head. Nora sat up curiously looking back and forth from the box to Jack. Jack crossed his legs and Nora sat up on her knees.

“Nora I want you to have this. I was going to give it to you when you got back…but I can't wait three years for that. This was my mothers, and my grandmothers. It has been in our family since the eighteen-fifty-six. And now its your turn to have it” jack slowly handed the small blue box to Nora. She

took the box. It felt weightless in her hand. She slowly lifted the lid. Inside the box was a ring. It had a gold band, a large diamond sat in the middle surrounded by littler diamonds and smaller diamonds on the band. Nora mouth fell open.

“Wow. Jack oh my goodness.” she sighed “It‘s beautiful”

“Yes it‘s beautiful like you. That’s why I wanted to give it to you. Because when I first saw it I immediately thought of you” he took the box back from her, and took the ring out.

“What about your mom” Nora said with smile in her voice “It’s hers what is she wearing now?” Jack laughed

“don't worry. She couldn't be happier about you becoming her daughter-in-law she already thinks of you as her daughter you know. But now, it‘s your turn” he took her left hand and slowly slid the ring in place on her ring finger. Nora beamed and a few laughs escaped her through her lips. She wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him fiercely.

“Nora Katherine Ann Greenhill.” Jack gasped at a small interval between their kissing “Will you marry me” Nora laughed

“You already know the answer”

“True. But now it’s official. I love you.” he moved up onto his knees so that he was at eye level with Nora. He wrapped his arms around her waist, and kissed her back. He smashed his lips to hers, and moved her hands up and down his back, they continued to kiss fiercely…

Chapter 13

The Socialite [12] Familiar

Chapter Twelve

Familiar

When Nora woke up the next morning the bed was empty. “Jack” she moaned, but he wasn’t there. Nora turned over to face the door and her eye caught something small and white folded up on the pillow next to her. She picked it up and unfolded it something small and shiny fell onto her chest, she read the note first.

Nora, it said in Jack‘s perfect script.

Your wish has come true… now you have a star of your own, think of it as me, remaining constantly with you. I found this in an antique store and thought of you

I will be back as soon as I can; I have gone to see Matthew.

Take care of my heart, it stayed with you.

Jack

Nora kept reading over the last few sentences of the note. Those last words meant the most to Nora. She was upset that she would have to spend the day by herself, she lowered the note and saw what had dropped on her. She picked it up and looked at it. It was a gold bracelet, with a thin chain of small links holing it together and in the middle was a gold star. She uneasily unhooked the bracelet and clipped it on her wrist. And it would stay there. Nora rolled out of bed and looked out the window, it was still miserable like yesterday and Jack's absence would only add to that, she changed into the same thing that she wore yesterday, the material was sill wet and hung heavily

off her body. She tipped-toed down stairs and walked through the dinning room to the kitchen.

Mary-Ellen was still sleeping her bed, and was too tired to hear her pass. Nora thought that she should be woken up but she looked to peaceful to be woken. The door creaked loudly as Nora opened it, but she didn't care. She stepped out the back door, and became instantly cold. The damp material of her dress was attached to her skin and the cold wind that passed her mad goose bump raise on her arms. She tried to rub them but it didn't do anything.

Nora started to walk foreword into the forest, she couldn't feel the stones or twigs breaking underfeed, they were too numb for her to feel anything. She didn't know where she was going. What direction she was walking in. what she would come across or what she would find at the end of her walk. She only had three days left with Jack, and he wasn't here right now. What if he didn't come back in time for her to say good bye? How long could he be gone for? What could possibly be wrong for Jack to leave? What was Matthew's problem? Nora couldn't think of anything

that would cause Jack to leave so suddenly. She stopped walking and lightly touched her forehead. It tingled, Jack must have kissed her there before he left. Nora smiled and continued to walk taking more notice of the surroundings. The forest was thicker then she had every seen it, or could remember it. The trees were closer together around her, hugging her. The reached higher in the sky touching branches, expanding into a thick dense canopy. The ground was damper, no much light would make it through the roof of branches and leaves.

Nora kept walking further and further away from the house, she couldn't see it anymore, only the faint sound of breaking water was all she could hear behind her. It smelled different here. No water, no tobacco, or the smell of car fuel. The smell of the foliage was thick in the air, and the occasional smell of wild flowers, when she passed small bunches grouped together at the bottom of tree trunks. Nora herd a familiar sound. Car tyres becoming louder and louder then get quieter and quieter as it passed. She was becoming closer to the road the ran along the edge of the forest. How far from the house was

she now. She quickly turned right and walked away from the road. She saw some light ahead of her. A thin ray of sunlight was breaking through the canopy further on in the forest. As Nora approached she could see more rays coming through the roof. Was the sun out and the miserable clouds gone? Nora could tell from down here. She stepped from the last darkness into the biggest ray of light. It was no warmer in the sun but Nora felt it. She looked up into the ray it blinder her, she closed her eyes and let it slowly warm her. Now felt better, she felt calmed and reassured about what she was doing. But she deep down nothing was different and she would never truly feel good about it. The sun faded away, and Nora was under the darkness of clouds. She opened her eyes and slowly continued to walk and forgot about the sun. she came into a small clearing was thick bushes to the left side and thin trees on the right a fallen tree in the middle of the clearing was resting against another. Thick moss had grown all over it. It reminded Nora of the ‘secret place’. it looked so much like it. It could have been but the surroundings were different. She walked over to it

and sat underneath it. The tree still looked stable enough not to fall down. If it did Nora would know. She curled her legs up and wrapped her arms around them. She looked around and closed her eyes and remembered.

“What are you doing Nora?” Jack laughed.

“Keeping the secret” Nora replied to Jack. She reached out her hand and took Jacks hand, she put it on top of the pile of dirt and the fond. His fingers intertwined with hers.

“Never show or tell anybody about this place” Nora said “Now you make a rule”

“Never come here alone” Jack said looking at Nora, she smiled.

“That’s a good one. You can only come here by yourself if you get permission by the other person first though” Nora added.

“Never share the secret” Jack said squeezing his and Nora hand closer together that it made Nora cringed.

“Never share the secret.” she repeated “I‘ll never keep any secret from you”

“I‘ll never keep a secret from you either” Jack said. their hand parted and the dirt and fern fond fell to the ground. Jack looked around the ground until his eyes found what he was looking for. He leaned into Nora reaching past her for a tick piece of tree bark, that had a point tip.

Nora laughed “What are you going to do carve the date into the log” Jack grimaced and pointed the bark at her stabbing the air twice. Nora face cringed “Don‘t!” she said angrily.

“No” Jack said “But that sound like a good idea I might do that after” He said turning the piece of bark on himself, holding it close to his right hand.

“whoa… Jack what are you doing?” Nora asked, stress shook in her voice.

“Keeping the secret‘” Jack said quoting Nora. Then he held the pointed end underneath his index finger. Pressing down hard he drew a line diagonally down his hand, from the top to the bottom- the top of his

palm directly underneath his pinkie and the top of his wrist. His face screwed up with the pain, he held his breath. And the bark pierced his skin, and then he had a small crimson line down the palm of his hand. When he was finished and the pain was relieved in his hand, he chucked the piece of bark to Nora it landed on her lap, the little blood that was on the tip stained her dress.

“Go on your turn” Jack said smiling.

Nora screwed up her face and if she was in pain. Then her expression changed to look like she was about the through-up. She was sick to her stomach, at the thought.

Nora looked down at the ground- that was spinning- shaking her head making her more dizzy.

“Jack no…” Nora said “I‘m not going to cut myself for this” with a weak effort Nora pushed it off her lap.

“Its not worth it” she said “Blood makes me sick anyway…” she made a face at his hand. Then made a hard effort to force her breakfast to say in her stomach were it belonged.

“Wait dose that mean I cut my hand for no reason” Jack said angrily.

“Jack you can get sick from it” Nora worried “Just at least think about how dirty that piece of bark was”

“Good god” Jack cried out “You are so sceptical Nora, do something impulsive for once if your life” Jack did have a point…but Nora didn’t want to think about the points that he was putting foreword. Because they all shared the same outcome as each other… Nora cutting her hand… but he did have an honestly true valid point. Nora did rarely have fun.

“Jack were only nine”

“Yes but we act older” Jack retorted.

“Fine” Nora said holding out her right hand looking around clenching her eyes tight shut, stopping her breathing all-together.

“I can‘t cut myself, your going to have to” Nora said through clenched teeth. Jack slowly picked up the piece of bark that had a small dry blood stain on it. He took Nora’s, hand it was cold, and pressed the bark lightly to her skin at first- as a sign of warning

that the pain was coming shortly to Nora- she drew in a long deep breath then held it. Jack slowly cut across the palm of her hand, in the same line as his. The bark pierced the skin and Nora let out a loud wail of pain. When he was done the pain went almost instantly. Nora stiffly turned her head around to look at a cut that stretched across her palm oozing blood. Nora could feel her breakfast churning in her stomach threatening to comeback up.

“All right” she swallowed hard “Do what ever you were planning to do next” Nora continued to look away from Jack, he dropped and Nora was left to find his bloody hand on her own. She let her hand flail about before she felt something smooth and warm. Jack’s hand.

“Never show or tell anybody about this place” Jack began repeated the rules that were said before “Never come here by yourself”

“You can only come here by yourself if you get permission by the other person first though” Nora added, she turned looking to Jack she had control of

her stomach and assured herself that she could do this.

“Never share the secret” they said to together.

Nora opened her eyes and whipped away the tears. A week later after that her ignorance told her that he had broken one of those rules. But her heart and mind was telling her that he was telling her truth. As a young child she listened to her ignorance over anything. Why did she do that? She could have spent the last ten years thinking about the lake, and possibly not feeling guilty. It annoyed her that one misunderstanding caused her to live in pain and guilt for so long. Was it really her mother fault or her own. Was it her decisions that lead to this. Nora picked the end of her dress, the was a small pull in the thread. She picked at it with the tips of her fingers. Finally she pulled it, she grabbed each side of the thread and pulled hard. Her dress finally spilt right up the middle. Nora shrieked, she grasped handful’s of dirt next to her and rubbed it all over her dress. Most of the dirt clung to the material but some fell away. She pressed her back up against the

tree trunk and stretched out her legs pushing them through the dirt, they soon became black. Nora screamed again she shifted herself on to the ground, she put her arm underneath her head and curled up and closed her eyes again.

Nora was putting on a soft white silk dress that Jack had told her to put on Mary-Ellen appeared at the door, with a crooked smiled on her face.

“You look beautiful” she comment on her dress. “Come” she said

Nora was suspicious. “Where‘s Jack” Mary-Ellen didn’t say anything “Where am I going?” Nora asked as they walked down the from steps. The night air was mild, and only a few stars lined with dark blue sky. A lavish limousine, waited for her. Nora got in “Where. Are. We. Going.?” she asked again, staring to get anxious.

Mary-Ellen ignore her question “Have a good night Mrs. Nora” she said then shut the door of the car, she watched as it pulled away from the house.

Nora was starting to get worried, she didn't know where Jack was or where she was going. She looking out the window as the trees of the forest speed past her.

"uh.. Excuse me, can you please tell me where I'm going' she asked the old man to who driving the car, but he ignored her.

She watched as the town sped past her, moving more and more behind. Eventually the car came to a stop. The old man quickly got out of the ten car and opened the door.

Nora stepped out and she was greeted with a procession of 'hello's' from many people. She stopped and looked around at the their faces.

Victoria. Sophie. Nicole. Fern. The faces of her friends that she hadn't seen since her high school graduation.

One by on Nora greeted them all and hugged then individually. She noticed something about each of them, something in common, they all wore matching blue dresses. Nora suspicions grew, as she walked

slowly foreword with them she looked at where they were heading.

It was a tiny chapel, with a small pathway and plants over growing on each side. It was beautiful.

“What?” Nora understand now. The car. The dresses. Her dress.

“Surprise” Fern said, she knew that Nora had figured it out. “Come on… he‘s waiting”

Nora was leading inside by the others girls. They got into a line formation in front of her, they passed down the line a bunch of flowers each.

Victoria handed one to Nora, she looked at it. “Come on, take it” stiffly Nora reached out and took the bunch of flowers her hand shaking

“I can‘t do this” she said her voice shaking more than her hands

Victoria smiled softly “Of course you can. Risks. Mistakes…”

“Is all a part of life” Nora said finishing her sentence.

Victoria nodded “You still thinks it‘s too late?”

Nora’s face screwed up “What do you mean… too late?”

“I know what you thinking Nora” Victoria said “I know you too well. I‘m sorry but you know it‘s never going to happen. Jack is gone… and Benjamin loves you so much”

“What?” Nora demanded “Benjamin? This is crazy, where‘s Jack”

Victoria rested her hand on Nora‘s shoulder “This is not the time to dwell on the past. That‘s what tomorrow is for”

Light gentle music started to play behind the doors, they opened slowly and the first to walk out was Nicole.

“Showtime” Victoria smiled. She waiting for the three other girls to walk out then she went. Looked down the small isle she could see Benjamin waiting his hadn folder in front on himself smiling. She was repulsed by him like she usually was, her nerves evaporate. And she felt like she was doing something right.

She walked over the threshold, the chapel wasn't filled with many people only the first three rows on eight side were filled. It was beautiful. A high ceiling that was decorated with flowers that hung in small garlands. Next to each row of seats candles in groups of threes hung on the walls. But Nora didn't care about any of that as she moved slowly she only cared about the man who was waiting for her at the end of the isle. If she didn't have to walk so slowly behind Victoria she would have ran. She finally came to the end, Benjamin held out his hand for her. And she took, eyes locked.

"Family. Friends. We are gathered here today in the presence of God to witness the marriage of this man and women"

"Nora," Benjamin began "The first time I met you, I though that you were beautiful. And over time you grew more and more beautiful. I have never stopped loving you. Every time that I'm around you my heart flutters, and I think… I'm am the luckiest guy in the world and I'm so fortunate to have you in my life"

Nora quickly wiped away a tear that was running down her check, then she took his hand again.

“Nora?” the priest said

“Um… I haven‘t actually prepared anything” she said quietly.

Benjamin smiled “Let you heart speak out” he whispered. Speak out. If she let her heart speak out she would go on forever. She looked into his eyes and the words started to come to her. “Benjamin, for the time that I have known you, you have taught me everything, you taught me how to love. You bought me to life, and I have so much to thank you of for that. I love you with all my heart, and nothing will every change that” she started to cry. She meant what she was saying, but she felt that say was saying it to the wrong person. She ignored the yearn in her heart for Jack and pulled Benjamin into her by his hands and kissed him intensely.

The priest made a necessary cough.

Nora pulled away from him “Sorry” she said sheepishly.

“Hurry up” Benjamin whispered to the priest.

“Fine” he growled “I know pronounce you husband and wife” Nora smiled and pulled Benjamin back into her, their kiss was more fierce. Everyone in the chapel began clapping.

Nora screamed, and was pulled back into reality her eyes were un- focussed. She gasped and breathed deeply. Her eyes focussed, she was still in the forest, underneath the tree. She must have fallen asleep, but why did she dream such a thing? Nora getting married to Benjamin Hobart? She almost felt sick. Did she dream one of his dreams by mistake. Nora couldn’t figure out why she would every dream that. It scared her that it passed through her mind at all.

“Nora?” she heard a voice call from the distance. She slowly registered that it was her mother’s voice. Nora gradually stood up her arms and legs were stiff. She noticed that it was much darker how long has she been gone for. She wanted to walk further into the forest and evade her mother but she knew that it was wrong, and she was very hungry.

“Mom” she tried to call but her voice was dry and sore. She started to walk in the direction that Ethel’s voice was coming from.

“Nora?” she continued to call.

Why was her mother out here looking for her? Did she love her that much to even care? Nora kept walking until she could make out the shape over her mother walking through the forest ahead. “Nora?” she blared, “Where are you?”

Nora came around a tree into her sight.

“Nora.” she said “where have you been” she ran up to hug her but Nora flinched away, Ethel dropped her arms sheepishly to her side. She looked at Nora up and down twice studying her appearance. No shoes, dirty feet and legs. Torn dress, with dirt stains. Messy hair with more dirt rubbed into it. “What have you been doing” Ethel demanded “What have you done to you dress?”

Nora shrugged and kept walking forward to the beach. “Nora! Come back here and talk to me”

She ignored her and continued to walk, not breaking pace “Nora!” Ethel hissed she ran after her. “Look at me, what have you been doing out here. Do you have any idea what the time is”

“No” Nora said through her teeth

“It is after midday, we have been worried about you”

“Fine…well where is everybody else” she came through the trees onto the beach, and walked towards the jetty instead of the house. The clouds had gone and the sun was shining brightly in the centre of the sky.

“Some of them are out at the town…but just me went looking for you in the forest…Where are you going now” Nora walked to the end of the jetty and stood looking at the water, she tried to ignore her mother but her voice was too loud for it to be blocked out.

“Nora will you just talk to me”

She continued to ignore her, the was a long silence the rippling of the water was only sound “Are you happy?” she said through clenched teeth.

“What?”

Nora turned around, her face hard her expression cold “Are you happy? I‘m miserable” she screamed “Are you happy?”

Ethel moved in closer “Nora, you have you understand my intentions”

“Intentions? Mom, don‘t you see that what your doing to me is hurting me more than you think. Do you have any idea what it is doing to me”

“My intentions have always been clear to you, you understand you know why. I just care about you education. I want you to have a bright future”

“Mom, my future is bright but can‘t I be happy. If you really love me, you‘ll respect my feelings and decisions”

Ethel closed the distance between her and Nora, she went to put her hand on Nora’s shoulder but she cringed and moved away “Nora, I do love you, but your decisions don‘t go in the way of your best interest, there is no value, there is nothing to gain by

it. What are you going to do you if it doesn't work out between you two. What are you going to do?"

"Mom, nothing bad will happen, we love each other"

"Nora" Ethel shook her head "This is bizarre, what if you to get married have a couple of children. But you don't really like living with him because everything is different to how you thought it would be, then what are you going to do. You can't divorce him, if you do you will loose everything, the kids, the house. Everything"

Nora wasn't scared by her mothers words. What she was saying was true, but she knew that it would never happen to her and Jack, they love each other so much. They haven't been in a relationship that long but she could feel something. There was a yearning in her heart, and a voice in her head that was telling her that it was the right thing to do. And right now that was all she could hear.

She shrugged her shoulders "I don't care…I rather take my chances at it then spent the rest of my life wondering what would have happened if I had taken a different turn along the road."

“You may not, but I certainly do. I simply can‘t allow such a thing to happen like this”-Nora turned around, she didn‘t want to look at her mother any more- “It isn‘t right”

“Go away” Nora said coldly

“What?”

“You heard me… Go. Away!”

Ethel didn’t move “Nora, I know that your upset bu-”

“Leave” Nora screamed “Now. Leave. Go Away” Ethel turned and walked away quickly, leaving Nora on her own.

She quickly wiped away a tear, looking at the mirror image of herself reflected in the water. She bent her knees leaned forward and dived into the water. It was cool and moved over her skin relieving it of the heat that Nora was oblivious to. She moved through the water then came up when she was out of breath. Her head broke through the last of the water and she breathed in deeply the oxygen that she craved. She pulled her legs up and floated her whole body on the water. She felt the drag of her dress pulling her

down, but she didn’t care. She kicked her legs and moved her arms in front of her slowly moving her down the lake. She didn’t know where she was going, or what direction she was swimming in. She let her mind wander as she did. This was perfect for her. This is what the lake was suppose to be for her. Escape. She have never swam in the water of the lake before. She now knew what she was missing. And who, she was missing. She should be doing this with Jack, but he wasn’t here now.

Chapter 14

The Socialite [13] Change

Chapter Thirteen

Change

Nora felt Jack's absence the most during the rest of the day. He didn't return in time for dinner, Nora could feel hers mothers eyes on her while she ate in silence. After dinner Nora stood up the table to leave and Ethel, embarrassed her further with making her formally apologise to everybody for her ruthless behaviour earlier today. She walked off to bed fuming with rage, over her mothers cruel actions.

She closed her door louder then necessary, and ran to her bed, she hid her head in her pillows and prayed

for the tinniest morsel of solace. She fell asleep still dressed, curled up on the seat of the bay-window, watching the stars come out.

She stood alone on cliff overlooking pristine blue water. It was much to humid for late July. Then an expected chill pass though the wind. Nora shivered and wiped her white dress over and over again with her hands. Until she realized that she was wiping thick, dark substance onto her dress. She looked at it and cringed with distaste.

Blood.

Where did it come from? She slowly lifted her hands. They were drenched in blood. Nora's stomach churned, she gets sick at the sight of blood. She tried to wipe it all off. But as she did more and more blood appeared on her hands. It wasn't her blood, there was no laceration. Where was it coming from?

There was a bright organ flicker out of the corner of her eye becoming bigger and bigger. She turned to see what it was.

Fire.

To the right of the cliff, there was a dock. Sprawling fires, rapidly becoming bigger, churning black smoke filtered to the sky. The fires were set on boats and on the land. The boats slowly sunk, being pulled into the ocean. And people ran around in panic. The blue water was disturbed with more blood streaming through, as the water became littered with bodies.

What had happened here? What was this place? What had caused such bloodshed?

Just then a deafening blunder filled the air, as two small, fast planes speed overhead, as they approached the terrible scene of despair. The circled twice, then an ear splitting sound came from the dock. One plane started to get smoke coming out the back, it fell from the sky like a dead bird and plundered into the water. The other plane flew away.

Nora was scared as she watched the massacre of innocent people. She could see clearly the worried faces as they tried and failed to defend themselves. Below, she could smell the saltwater, mixed with blood; even the raw stench of death was thick in the air as it swirled around from all parts of the dock.

She could here their frantic screams of fear, she tried to scream back but no sound came from her mouth.

There was no way that she could help them.

She woke to the sound of creaking floorboards a dull light flashed past the door.

“Jack?” she said, but there was no sound, the light vanished. Nora sat up and realised that she was still on the seat by the bay-window, she slowly stood up, her knees ached from being bent for so long. The thin crescent moon was high is the sky visible from her window. What time was it? She quickly crossed the floor of her room and peered out of her door, Jack’s door was half-closed, she could make out a dark silhouette moving around the room. She crossed the hallway to his door, she opened it slowly.

“Jack” she whispered. He jumped slightly with shock.

“Sorry” Nora said quietly

“It’s fine honey, it’s me” he was nothing more than a voice floating in the air. Nora searching through the dark but could only make out his shape with the limited light. “Sorry I got home so late”

“Where did you go?”

“Columbia, that’s where I was meeting Matthew, Sorry I got in so late”

Nora moved gently into the room, she held out her hand and found his bed, she sat down, and sighed “What’s the time now?”

“Just after two”

Nora moaned “What did he want?” Jack found her and kissed her on the forehead. Nora detected strain and reluctance in his kiss. “I’ll tell you in the morning, I promise, I Just want to sleep now…Why are you still dressed, did you wait up for me. Honey that‘s silly you shouldn‘t have done that”

“But I didn‘t” Nora defended herself “I feel asleep this way, I missed you today, tell me everything. I want to know, I can sleep later…”

Jack shook his head, but Nora couldn’t see it. He sat down next to Nora and wrapped his arms around her “Not now darling, it‘s really late. I‘ll tell you in the morning”

“No” Nora said coldly “I want to talk about it now”

“Nora, its half-past two in the morning. Can’t you wait six hours” He tightened his arms around her, but she tried to push herself away. After a few moments he let her go, she stood up and glared at him through the dark, even though he couldn’t see it he could feel it.

“No, now” she said through her teeth “Jack there is something that you aren’t telling me, and I don’t like it, so we talking about this no-”

“I’ve joined the army” Jack said monotone, cutting Nora off.

No one spoke.

It was silence in the room, so dark, so heavy. It was crushing Nora, suffocating her. She didn’t know what was going on, she still hadn’t registered Jack’s words when he sat up and rested his hand on her shoulders.

“What?” she said through gritted teeth.

“I have joined the army” Jack repeated standing up next to her.

“The army. The army” Nora said over and over again. “The army” each time she said it slightest bit louder working her self up.

She snapped out of trance, focussing back into reality “The army!” she screamed, “You joined the army?”

“Shh…” he tried to calm her “You‘ll wake everybody up”

“Nora,” Jack said moving in closer to her “You have to understand my motivations”

“Motivations?” Nora mimicked “What motivations. Me. Jack you don’t understand you don’t have to prove anything to me anymore” Jack slowly walked towards the door. “Don’t you walk away from me” Nora said through her teeth. Jack stood at the door looking into darkness.

“No, you don’t understand” he said then walked out of the room.

Nora started to walk after him, through the hall down the staircase. “Jack” She hissed. She ran after him not caring about waking anybody else up. The front door hung open a fraction, Nora walked

through and ran to close the distance between her and Jack. He sat alone on the jetty looking up at the stars.

“Jack” Nora said “I’m sorry, can you come inside please so that we can talk about this-”

“He got drafted” Jack said keeping his eyes on the stars “Matthew, that’s why he contacted me, Riley and Luke as well. Nora, he’s scared.”

Nora knelt down next to him, she rested her hand on his shoulder lightly, he half smiled and rested his right hand on top.

“We decided together…it wasn’t fair to him”

“Is he alright”

Jack laughed “Scared as hell. Nora you should have seen him”

Nora set herself down next to him, while he watched the stars, Nora watched him. “Jack” she whispered “you don’t have to do this. I don’t want you to do this. Look at me”-Jack slowly turned his focus to Nora- “Do you hear me? You don’t have to be the hero here”

Jack turned his whole body around to face her, Nora's ignorance told her to look a away but she disregarded it "Nora, he is my friend. It's not just me going with him; Riley and Luke are going too"

"Jack I don't want you to die" Nora fought back the tears the rose in her eyes. Jack smiled his crooked smile, he took Nora's face in his hands "I won't" he whispered.

"You might" Nora stopped short of breath "Jack, think about all we have been through, what I have had to endure when you weren't with me. We haven't even started our lives together, why would you want to leave me know?"

Jack didn't answer; he processed Nora words in his head keeping his eyes locked on hers "I just, wanted to do something right"

Nora shook her head "Jack, this is not right. You could get killed"

Jack moved in closer her slid his hand down her neck to around her waist, he pulled to the ground "Nora love," he whispered "I can't lie to you. But this is the

reality of the situation. There is nothing that I can do about it now; I gave my pledge of allegiance to the United States Army. I have to leave at the end of next week”

Nora could no longer keep her tears at bay; they spilled over wetting the ground in little dots. She couldn’t comprehend that the man she loved so much was about to leave her, just when she thought everything was going to be alright.

“I’m coming with you”

“No” Jack said coldly “Nora, I can’t let you do that. Put you in that jeopardy. If something happened to you it…it would destroy me”

“Good” Nora mumbled “Then maybe we actually be together”

“Nora” Jack said hoarsely “You say things like that. We will be together, but nothing perfect, life isn‘t perfect. Things like this…they happen, but we always find our way through it. Nora, you can’t buy love, but you can pay heavily for it” he quoted her.

“I don‘t want to lose you again” she whispered “After everything, I just want my happily-ever after”

“You never know what life may bring.”

“And you have no idea what could possibly happen”

“Jack? Nora?” said a voice from behind them, Nora turned to see Ted slowly approach them, with a wary expression. “what’s going on” Jack ignore his farther.

Nora breathed in, she couldn‘t lie to Ted he had always been so nice to her “He…joined the army”

Ted expression went from wary to devastation. “What? Why? How? Jack.. Why would you do such a thing?” he moved to the other side of Jack, whom pretended to be absorbed by the stars in the sky. “Why?” as Jack continued to be ignorant his father’s patience was becoming thinner. “Why would you do that? Look at me boy, if your going to do this then at least have the courage of a man to look at me and say it to my face. Do you hear me?” it was the first time that Nora had ever seen such a side to Ted, it scared her. Jack slowly turned his face to his father, he stood up keeping eye contact with him.

“I‘m sorry” he whispered “but it was the only choice I had…it was loyalty to my best friend and I owe it to him”

“My boy…” Ted said holding out his hand, Jack slowly reached out for it, he took his fathers hand, and shook it slowly.

“Father” he half-smiled

Nora stood up “Wait, wait” she was confused “Ted your alright with this, what if he gets killed. Did you think about that”

Ted dropped Jack’s hand “Dear, sweet Nora do you not see, this is an honour for our boy”

Nora fumed, Jack turned around to her and winked, and kissed the air “Argh…” she screamed “Ted this isn‘t right. He could die… it may have been an honour many years ago but now it is an act of stupidity”

Ted nodded “Indeed, but what a great deal he is doing for his country” Nora screamed again, then stormed off the jetty back towards the house. She couldn’t believe that Ted was supporting Jack with

this. It was stupid, and her could get hurt or die. Nora didn't want him to go. They were being spilt anyway, but she would prefer that he went to college instead of the army. What would he do there, learn how to use a gun, learn how to kill another man. Nora knew Jack to well, he would never kill another man, he would never want to know how to kill another man. This wasn't a good thing, it was terrible that Jack good-will got him into this. Nora wasn't sure how to get him out or if there was even a way.

Nora was sympathetic in the morning then angry, during the day she continuously begged him not to do it, and every time he told her that their was no way.

"You can't be serious" Nora said in the hallway after dinner.

"I'm sorry' Jack said again "I know that you don't like it.. Everyone else dose" Nora grimaced "Can't you see that what I am doing it helping someone else gravely, I am making all the difference here"

"Yes" Nora snapped "I can see it, I wish I couldn't but I'm leaving the day after tomorrow and I feel like we

have spent nearly all of our time- not together. I can‘t stand know that you won‘t be with me after this”

“I will be…if you want me to be your not”

“Goodnight” Nora said kissing him quickly “I hope your dreams knock some sense into you”

Jack laughed “Maybe” then disappeared into his room. Nora sighed then turned and went into her room.

The night was mild, a cool breeze blew in from the water. The sky was clear and many stars dotted the sky. The moon was small and moved from one side of the sky to another. Nora couldn’t sleep, she watched her curtains moved on the light breeze that came through the open window. She though about the years to come, what she would do, where she would go, people she would meet. Then, something else came into her mind, it didn’t surprise her when Jack came into her mind. What would she do for the years to come without him? There were so many things that she still hadn’t gotten to do with him. Things that could only be postponed until he came back. She wanted to marry him. In the most perfect church, she

didn't care if the church was in another country. With the most perfect flowers, and with most perfect dress. But would she every get the chance to walk down the isle to the most perfect man? She wanted to marry him now. She wanted to build- or buy- a house with him. She wanted his children. Out of everything she could think of there was only one thing that she could get before he left. It was special to her, and she wanted him to be the first person.

Nora slowly got out of her bed, and went to her door. She opened it and looked down the hall, it was still dark and empty. She tip-toed across the hall to Jack's door, she lightly rapped three times then waited. The door creaked opened slowly, Jack stood there in front her rubbing his eyes.

"What? Nora?" he squinted through the dark at her. She moved into him quickly wrapping her around his neck pushing him back into his room, she locked her lips to his. After he understood everything he wrapped his arms around her. She balanced on one foot and kicked his door shut behind her. They

moved together across the room to his bed, they sat down together.

Jack pulled his lips away from Nora's "Wait. What are you doing?"

Nora tried to catch her breath "Jack. If I'm not going to see you for three years, then there is something that I want from you first, I don't want to miss this… this chance. I want you to be my first; I can't wait until after marriage."

"What?"

"You're the only boy that I have every loved. I know that we are getting married and we should probably wait for that but…" she up wrapped her hands and slid off the bed she stood up from him, the minimal light in the room strained Jack's eyes to see. "I can't." Nora slid her arms out of her night gown and let it fall to the ground "I can't wait that long…" she lifted her arm in front of him "Can you?" she asked "can you wait… or can you go three years of you life and wonder what could have happened tonight" Jack stared at her hand, half scared and worried, then

slowly he stood and shook his head. He reached into the darkness and took her hand.

“No” he said “I can‘t. No” he pulled her into him, locking his arms around her waist he slowly moved his fingers lightly up and down her back. She hurriedly undid the buttons of his pyjama top, he realised his arms from around her waist and slid the top off, then she shook his legs out of his pants. They fell together on his bed locked in their embrace.

Nora slept late into the morning the sun moved over her face, but didn’t disturb her as she was lost deep in slumber.

Jack kissed her on the cheek, “Good morning” he breathed into her ear; Nora turned over and buried her head in his chest.

“Do we have to get up, can’t we sleep all through the day” her voice muffled.

Jack laughed “No we have to get up, and besides it our last day today” his voice changed tones.

Nora moaned “All the more reason to stay, so that we can spend all our day together. Come on, in here we can be away from the world”

Jack slowly shook his head “Sorry, but if it‘s our last day don’t you think we should do something more productive together”

“True” she moaned again “alright-time to get up” she moved stiffly off the bed, she found her night and quickly slipped it over her head, she walked to the door and turned around to look at Jack who was watching her with a warm smile “See you in a little while- I have to freshen up…and, thank-you. It meant a lot to me” she opened the door and walked out.

She tip-toed quickly across the hall and disappeared into her room. She changed her clothes, and put her night gown on the floor in a dirty pile. She stopped buttoning her dress and thought. She had gotten what she wanted, she had gotten to share on of the most important things in the world with Jack before she had to leave him and it was so much easy that she had first thought. If only everything else in the world could be as easy as that.

War. Life. Love.

But she knew that it was as simple as that and life it self was just as hard and complicated as war.

Nora moaned to herself “Stupid life” she muttered, Jack laugh that came from behind scared her.

“Naturally life is stupid” he laughed again “it‘s suppose to be life that” Nora slowly turned around, Jack was fully dressed already sitting on the end of her bed with his legs crossed like he had been there the whole time.

“But why dose it have to be so damn complicated and annoying.” she slowly moved over to him on the bed.

Jack rolled his eyes “Because, like I said it‘s suppose to be”

“I know, I know, but it really is annoying. I wish that everything could be perfect and…you know flawless” Nora sat on her bed next to him

“If everything was ‘perfect’” Jack whispered “There would be no circle of life. Bad things happen, they do,

but only because they are too happen. Life would go on if they didn‘t, that’s why they have too!”

Nora rested her head on his shoulder “I‘m going to miss you too much. You explain thing to me so that I understand it, you put life into a exact perspective for me”

Jack kissed her on the head “I‘m sure you‘ll find someone to do that for you while I‘m gone”

“No, no one will every be able to do it the same as you”

There was a knock at the door, Nora turned around to see her father standing in front her mother, smiling softly.

“Sorry darling to disturb you, the Hobart‘s and the Scott‘s left early this morning and the March‘s are leaving now. After they go your mother and Jack-your parents are coming with us into town, would you like to come with us?”

Nora didn’t look at Jack to deliberate “No thank-you, were fine here” she said then turned back around.

She waited for the door to close but sound came, she turned around to check that they were gone.

“Sorry” she said looking back at Jack “but, like you said ‘it’s our last day together, we should do something productive’”

“No, no I was fine with not going, I just wasn’t sure if you would have wanted to go”

Nora shook her head “The only place I want to go with you is our waterfall”

“Alright” Jack said taking her hand, they rose off the bed together “but first, breakfast”

Nora grumbled “That‘s stupid…it‘s our last day together and you want to worry about things like breakfast”

Jack sighed “Nora, breakfast it an important thing. We will be out nearly all day and I won‘t have you complain about starvation, or dieing because you didn‘t eat. If I have to drag your lifeless-foodless back to this house at the end of the day then I will at least make sure that our parents know that it was you stupid fault”

Nora's face dropped "Sorry" she said quietly looking away from him "Breakfast?"

Jack smiled in triumph "Yes indeed"

Nora chewed down her breakfast with a sour look on her face, while Jack smirked. She swallowed the last of her boiled egg and grimaced at Jack.

"There" she said "are you happy now?"

Jack laughed "Yes, thank-you"

"Come on then, can we go now please?" Nora pushed her chair out from the table and stood up. "I want to leave before the parents come back"

Jack nodded in agreement "Come on" he stood up next to her and took her hand, he led her out the front door to the jetty. He dropped Nora's hand, knelt down and began untying the rope. Nora watched him work then left her eyes to look out across the lake, it was more beautiful today then yesterday. The color of the lake was different, she remembered yesterday. She remember how the flow of the water over skin felt, like silk spun by angles. She didn't want to leave tomorrow.

“Nora?” Jack’s voice broke her concentration. “Nora? Are you alright”

She heard Jack, but minutes after ha had actually asked did she register it, she slowly nodded her head. “I don‘t want to leave here tomorrow Jack”

“I know” he said stroking her arm gently.

“Have you ever swam in the lake?” she said moving to the end of the jetty, she curled her toes over the edge.

“No” Jack, said “I haven‘t” the question caught Jack off-guard but after a second’s though he realised that he had never swam once in the lake. Only the waterfall.

“I have” she said “It‘s fantastic, so calming, I love it. The feeling. I can‘t believe that after all these years I have never once swam in the lake. You should, before you leave” Nora quickly unbuttoned her dress, hoping that Jack wouldn’t undertsand what she was doing.

“You‘ll wait for me” she pushed her lips to his, and moved her hands up and down her back..

“Yes” Jack gasped. They parted and Nora fell, her head hit the pillow, she sighed. Jack pulled back the bed cover and slid under, he blew out the candle and the room fell into darkness. The only light was coming in through the window, the moon shining through a small break in the clouds, then the room darkened as it disappeared again. Nora laid on the top of the covers until she was cold.

“I‘m going to miss you.” she whimpered. She slid under the covers and cuddled up close to Jack.

“I‘m going to miss you to” he said kissing her on the head, underneath the covers he wrapped his arms around her and pulled her close to him.

“We‘ll write each other. Every day.” Nora turned over to look at him, but she couldn't see him through the dark. But as her eyes adjusted she made out the small contours of his face.

“We can do that... But that just won't be enough. Not being able to see you each day. Not being able to looking into your eyes and feel reassurance, or your smile and feel at home. My memories never do

justice for what you actually look like to me” a tear feel from her eye and stained her pillow.

“And home won't be the same without you…but you keep up the end of our deal and keep up mine” he whipped her eye.

“Keep you heart beating. I can do that.” there was a small procession of tears that followed, but Nora allowed them to fall. she wasn't embarrassed anymore and she had reason too. She kissed Jack then buried her head into his chest.

“Jack” her voice was muffled by the chest “Do you know what this reminds me of?”

“Nora” Jack said firmly he flinched away from her to look at her face- though it was dark and very little light was in the room- but he managed to find it “This isn't like last time. I thought we‘d made it past that”

“Yes, Yes” Nora said quickly sitting up straight in the bed again “But I was not referring to that. All of this just seems a bit like… Romeo and Juliet to me. The two families. Wanting to be together but can't. our love is forbidden and all that you know, I just… don't

want to end up shotting myself because this just didn't work out they way we hoped” their was strain in Nora’s voice. A small chuckled pierced trough the darkness.

“Oh Jack” Nora sighed. She moved her hand through the darkness searching for his face. She found it then pulled herself in closer to him. She craned her head to kiss him on the lips, but before they touched she said. “Did you really think that it was going to work out the way we planed…nothing ever dose in this world?” Jack laughed

“Quiet down and kiss me” he kissed her fiercely and they fell down to the pillows, wrapped in each others arms.

“Thank you” Whispered Nora “For not completely wrecking my life…like my mother… but for completing it”

“Your welcome” he kissed

Nora sighed “Do you believe that there is someone for everyone?”

While Jack though he moved his fingers through her hair. every time his fingertips touched her skull goose bumps rose on her neck. “Of course” he whispered “Of course there has to be someone for every one. Whether we find the one that were suppose to be with… you‘ll know when it happens”

“What happens if you aren‘t the one that I‘m suppose to be with”

“Don‘t think that”

Nora whimpered “But what if I’m supposed to be with a man from Washington? And I’m just wasting my time here…”

“Impossible” Jack breathed

“And lets say hypothetically that I’m supposed to be with this man…but then he gets hit by a cattle truck and dies. Then what am I suppose to do? Jack? What am I suppose to do? ”

Jack blocked Nora’s sobs with a kiss. “Then you find me” he whispered “Because clearly you weren‘t meant to be with the first man”

They fell asleep together in each others arms. Nora had left the window open, again. Out side the weather hadn't changed. The rain started to pour down again. And it spatted floor and her curtains blew around.

That night Nora fell asleep easily , Jack’s presence comforted her… Warmed her. When she fell into a deep slumber, her dreams took over and pulled her into a world of make-believe. There was no escape for Nora.

She was running fast through the forest drawing in long laboured breaths her heart ached there was a stitch in her stomach, and a dry lump in her throat. Her feet was sore and bleeding. The rain was falling fast and heavy through the canopy of tree tops above, making the ground wet and slippery. Nora was searching for it, looking for it. But she could find it. She tripped over a log and fell to the ground, she rolled over onto her back and looked up to the sky. The rain pelted down, it was cold and pierced into her skin like a thousand needles. Nora moaned, then started to cry.

“What is it you want me to find” Nora screamed up to the sky “I‘ve lost everything what more do I have to loose”

The dull lit of the morning woke Nora, she was panting fast her forehead covered in a slippery residue. She was no longer in Jack’s arm but on the other side of the bed from him. She looked out of the window and moaned the day was rainy, miserable and ominous, again.

Then it dawned on Nora. Today she was leaving to go back to Columbia to pack up her things, before she and her family left for Bronxville. Her eyes immediately filled with tears. She didn't want to wake Jack up, so she tried to keep as quiet as she could.

Jack. Jack. How was she suppose to deal with the fact that in near to an hour she would be leaving him for three years. What happen if she got his wrong address, or if he never replied? What happen if she forgot about him or he forgot about her? What would happen if he found someone else? Would he take the ring off her?

The ring. It was so beautiful

‘Like you’ he told her. The ring all of a sudden felt a hundred pounds on her finger.

She slid out of her bed and walked over to the open window. It felt like dejavu the cold water under feet. Out side the rain was pelting down, and Nora remembered her dream. It didn't have the same impact on Nora as her previous dream had. There was a cool shiver down her back, the hair on the back of her neck stood on end- but maybe that was low temperature- not her remembrance of the dream. Jack turned over in the bed. But didn't wake up. Nora decided to leave him where he was. He looked so peaceful. What was he dreaming about? Something happy?.

Nora walked out of the room tip-toeing as quietly as she could. she closed the door slowly but it creaked. So she left it half open.

Not many people were up when Nora walked through the doors of the dinning room. Her parents and Jack’s were sitting up the far end in their usual place with Audrey and Samuel Hobart and Kimberly

Hallett. Their quiet chit-chat stop when Nora's presence was recognised. Nora ignored her usual seat at the end of the table and sat in the first chair she came to, closest to the door-Elliott Schaffer's seat-she picked up a piece of toast and slowly began nibbling little pieces off the end.

"Good morning Nora" Martha said sincerely, chewing on a piece of toast with marmalade.

"Good morning Martha. Through to me it isn't such a good morning" Nora replied as sincere as Martha had though her tone was flat and lifeless. Nora reached out for a knife and the light coming from the chandelier shone off her ring, glimmering brightly through the room. Ethel caught sight of the ring on Nora's finger, and scowled at it. Martha smiled.

"Darling" Edmund said, talking to her from the complexly opposite end of the table "Why don't you go upstairs and get ready, we'll be leaving soon. Mary-Ellen will help you"

"Well…ahh…Jack…is kind-of…still aslee-"

Edmund Cut her off "Now" his voice was hard.

Nora could feel that her presence was no longer wanted. Maybe the kind-of alliance with her father was over. Had her mother convince him other wise? Or was there some other reason as to why he was being so mean to her this morning? Maybe he just ahd a bad night sleep?

Nora’s stomach was churning she suddenly felt sick, she put her toast down on her plate, it had one tiny little bite mark in it. She wasn't hungry anymore. Nora got up and left the room quickly.

When she was back in her room, Jack was still sleeping his deep breaths were long and even. Nora walked over to her bed-side table and opened it as quietly as she could, it creaked. Jack was either in a very deep sleep or he was in a coma. Nora picked out the first piece of clothing that her hands touched. It was a white dress with a black floral pattern, it was one of on her favourites. she quickly changed ignoring Jack, she was pretty sure that he wouldn't even know if she was there or not.

There was a small knock at the door.

“Come in” Nora said quietly.

“God morning madam. Did you sleep well?” Mary-Ellen came through the door and walked straight to the dresser and opened it.

“Shh…” Nora warned her then point to Jack; he had rolled over to his stomach. “um… okay I guess.” she said in answer to Mary-Ellen’s question.

“Is Mr. Jack staying in that bed?” Mary-Ellen asked as she started to pile out Nora’s clothes.

Nora turned to look at Jack sleeping soundly in her bed. Even though she was leaving him today, she felt like she had already said good by to him last night. She didn't want to have to go through it again, and she thought that it would be better this way.

“Yes.” Nora said with a lump in her throat “Let him be” she turned back to Mary-Ellen and leaned in close to her ear she whispered “When he wakes up. If I have left. Tell him… I‘ll come back to him… and that I‘ll keep my promise, and that I hope he‘ll keep his” Nora eyes began to fill with tears but she managed to blink them back. Mary-Ellen turned and looked at Nora, she could see the pain in her eyes.

“Can I trust you with that?” Nora asked curiously.

“Yes Miss Nora” Mary-Ellen whispered back. Nora knew that she could trust her.

While Mary-Ellen packed, Nora sat in her rocky chair, switching between looking out the window, and looking at Jack. Nora was thinking about what Sarah Lawrence would be like. If the teachers would be nice. If her room mate would be nice. What it would look like. She thought about all these things but Jack would not be there to experience it with her.

Mary-Ellen disrupted Nora’s depressed thoughts. “Madam?” Nora looked up to her “I‘m done here” she whispered, and handed Nora her hat and gloves. Nora slid her right handed glove on then looked at her left. She took off her ring, it cold air bit at the exposed skin. She laid it on her lap then quickly pulled on the other glove then put it back on. It felt in place their…. Like it was made to sit on her finger.

“Ok” Nora sighed, a dry lump rose in her throat. This was it… she stood up and walked to the other side of the bed where Jack was still sleeping peacefully. She leaned down and lightly kissed him on the cheek,

Jack’s cheek flinch but he didn't wake. Nora walked to the door. She put her hand on the door and looked back one last time at Jack. A tear fell down her cheek, then she looked away and slowly closed the door behind her.

She walked slowly behind Mary-Ellen who was carrying her suitcase, she put her hat on her head then turned and walked down the stairs. The front door was already open, Mary-Ellen walked through the light rain first. Nora stood in the door way at looked back into the house. She would remember this place. If this would be the last time she walked through these doors or not. She walked into the rain, it wasn't heavy, it was only light. Ethel and Edmund were standing by the trunk of the car talking to Martha and Ted. Mary-Ellen walked over to the trunk that was already open and packed with Ethel and Edmunds trunks. Nora stoped next to Ted, she half smiled to him. He leaned over kissed her on the cheek and gave her a hug.

“I will miss you Nora, you were always my favorite student. I am so proud of you.” he patted her on the back.

“I will miss you to Ted, you have always been like a second dad to me” she laughed “Mr. Gold you where my favorite principal.” they parted “Hey maybe you could get a job at Sarah Lawrence. Jack told me before you were the Principal at Columbia, you were a college professor” Ted laughed

“I‘ll do my best” Ted promised.

Nora moved onto Martha, she was about to cry, the tears were building up in her eyes. Nora burst into tears and fell into Martha’s arms. Martha kissed her on the hair

“Oh Nora I‘ll miss you so much” she said sniffling back the tears.

“You too”

“I am so happy for you” Martha said parting from Nora and picking up her hand “You‘ll be the perfect daughter-in-law” she kissed on her cheek

“And you‘ll be the perfect Mother-in-law”

“You are already a daughter to me. That ring suits your finger, it‘s almost as if it was made for you” Nora agreed with Martha on that she had though the same before.

“Okay” Edmund announced. “It‘s time to go” he moved over to Nora and guided her to the open door. Ted closed the trunk, and walked around the side behind Martha to say their final goodbyes. Nora rested her hand on the door, she was about to get in when there was a loud bang that came from the house.

“Nora!” Jack called from the porch. Nora turned around, Jack was running along the beach- still in his pajamas- towards to Nora. She smiled and ran to close the distance between them. Nora ran into his arms. She held his head then smashed her lips to his. When the parted Jack pulled her closer into his body he whispered into her ear “come back to me” He took her and pulled it up to his chest and rested it against his heart, she could feel it beating under her fingers.

Nora started to cry again. He let go of her, still holding her hand and backed away slowly.

“Okay?” he said “Come back to me” tears fell down Nora’s face, she nodded and he slowly let go of her hand. It dropped to her side. She lifted it to her chest and held it there.

“I‘ll come back” she said through her tears. Then turned and walked back to the car. Before she got in she looked back once at Jack, he was smiling at her the way she liked it. Then she got into the car, closed the door and it started to pull away. Away from the house. Away from the lake. Away from the tree tops. The forest. The water fall.

Away from Jack.

She turned around in her seat, and waved once more to Martha and Ted and Jack who was now a few feet behind them. She blew him a kiss and as the car move further away from the house he was gone from sight.

Nora looked behind herself long after he was longer in her sight, then she slowly turned around in her

seat. She didn't bother to put on her seat belt, a tear fell down her cheek as she watched him become further and further behind her.

Driving back through Columbia nothing felt the same. It didn’t make Nora feel happy as it use to. Everything was depressing to Nora, as the car turned from Washington avenue on to Main street Nora saw the corner out the front of Ms. Owens flower shop where she met Jack the day he and his family Moved back from Charleston.

Nora already missed Jack, and the painful memories were overwhelming. Main street had turned into one long memory lane for her. Everything reminded her of Jack. She hadn’t had much time to prepare for this. In the short time she had she did her best. But now that she was actually away from him and he was gone she found it harder than she had anticipated and all her time that she had spent preparing was wasted.

Why was it so hard to look out of the window? She then she saw the very reason why, Columbia high school… it may have been summer, but Nora was

looking at dark looming rain clouds that reined over the place that Nora spent five days a week sitting next by his side breathing in his delicious natural scent.

Being away from Jack right now meant being away from the lake- the lake that she didn't want forget for a second time, and she wasn't reassured one-hundred percent that she wouldn't.

She would be so preoccupied in New York that she didn't even know if she would have time to think about the lake. She desperately didn't want to forget one little detail, the colour of the ground, the feeling of her bed sheets. The smell of the air, the slippery cold, touch of the moss. But mostly the soft touch of Jack's skin.

The memories she had wouldn't not be enough to sustain her aspiration to kiss him one last time. She wished that the last time he had kissed her would have lasted for ever. She wished that time could have been frozen and they had an eternity to say goodbye, but no matter how much time they had she would

miss him and experience the pain that she felt right now.

Nora had forgotten why exactly she had agreed to go to Sarah Lawrence in the end. Was it for her mother? Was it for her? Or was it for Jack? She couldn't remember. But one thing that narrowed it down was she wasn't doing this for her mother.

But her mother didn't care what her daughter though of her- she was just happy that Nora was going to Sarah Lawrence, and that she would be away from Jack.

She'd be at Sarah Lawrence, doing what she dreamed for her daughter to do for years. It was more her dream than Nora's, but she seem to have transformed that to make Nora think that it was her dream. She was pleased with herself with getting her daughter into college and the good job that she had done - writing her application for her.

Nora would be away from Jack that was something that put a big grin on her face. Nora wouldn't have her head in the clouds anymore, she would very busy

with no time to ponder, and she would make sure of that.

Ethel didn't want anything more then Nora's happiness, no matter what it cost her. But Ethel couldn't see that the thing that made her happy was the on thing that she was taking her away from. He was everything that made her happy. The love that Nora shared with Jack was something that could not be explained. He was her entire world. She live in his place. And she had put an ecological footprint on his heart.

They shared the world together.

And Nora too could see that her mother didn't mean any harm but she didn't want to even acknowledge her mother presence in her life. She did not want to think, smell, see touch or even communicate with her mother. And once she finished Sarah Lawrence she would come back Columbia where Jack would be waiting for her… and together they would go back to Lake Wylie and live in the house that Jack would have built. Together they would live their for as long as their hearts would keep beating.

Keep beating…only one of Nora's task's that Jack had asked of her…and she was determined to keep that promise.

But she was just going to take one step at a time, and when all of this was over in years to come she would look back and not know what to think. Until she finally put everything behind her and continued on with her life and a clean slate.

Nora turned the ring around her finger, thinking about how she knew that she had made the right choice. And no person in the world not even Jack could convice her other wise or make her change her mind. Her mind had been made up and she was intent on seeing it through.

There was a small break into the ominous sky revelling a small beam of sunlight that could have been a mirage. Nora wished that it could have been, she had no idea why the sun would be shinning for her. As far as she knew everyday from now on would be as ominous as today. But the small ray of light caught the ridge of a curve in the diamond and thousands of different spectrums of the diamond was

cast through out the interior of the cars. The action made Nora only half happy. The only thing she could think of that god was mocking her.

What a sick joke Nora thought, but out the corner of her eye she was sure that she saw the small shape of a heart made out of several of the spectrums. Then all of a sudden the sun retreated behind the clouds and all the light was lost form the sky for Nora. The shimmering light of the ring was lost. Nora felt the car slow immensely as it came to a stop in the drive way. When the car engine turned off Edmund and Ethel got out of the car, their doors closing at the same time. Nora sat idle in the car staring at her ring. It not longer weighed a hundred pounds , no longer pulling down her finger to the floors. It no longer seem to have a large sign hanging over the top of it that said ‘Engaged’- engaged with a capital ‘E’.

Her parents where in the house meters away from Nora. They weren’t with a least ten yards form her. Nora thought the timing was necessary. She though no one was looking, she had to do it now.

Nora filled her lungs with air, but there was no relief. She felt that her lungs didn't need it thought the action felt necessary. She sucked in air once more building up the voice and momentum. But mostly the courage that gave her the strength to do what she about to do. Coming entirely form the heart. Nora screamed as hard and loud as she could. She slammed her head against the back of her seat feeling the impact but not getting any pain. She stomped her feet up and down and whacked her arms as hard as she could against the head rest of the driver's seat. She was following through but was finding no end result. She was releasing nineteen years of repressed feelings in just a small amount of seconds. But it wasn't giving her joy like she thought it would. She was screaming her lungs out; releasing the pressure from them she was voicing her pain and making it known to the world. But there was no one to hear. She was letting off the steam that she had wanted to, in the last two days, but held it in for the sake of her reputation which she know wished she had flushed down the toilet instead of putting it on top of a pile that was already sky high and about to

tip over. But she made that decision and now she was not even half happy. And now there was no one to see. She only hoped that the one person that she hated so much right now would be here watching this and see everything. She wished that they could see the pain that she was going through.

Tears fell down her face she continued to thrash her body around the car. The pain she felt was not physical it was all mental. Everything was coming from inside. The pain was everything that she had rejected days, months even years ago when she pushed it to the back of her mind and ignored. Right now it was all coming back.

Nora stopped screaming and hitting her head on the seat. But she did not seize hitting the headrest of the drivers seat. The was knocking the rest of her pain out of her body. Through her hands. She was hitting whoever she wanted to hit.

Out of anyone that she wanted to hit. She was hitting her mother. For treating her like an adult at the age of four. For never giving her freedom and independence, or letting her voice her opinions. For

not approving of her love for Jack. But mostly out of everything that she wanted to tell her mom that she was angry with her about or even hit her for. She was hitting her for separating them and keeping them apart.

Nora took one last swing at the headrest making sure to follow through, she hit it with all of her strength. There was an awful crunching sound as her fingers made contact the headrest, it felt like she had hit a brick wall. She couldn't deny the pain searing in her fingers, it was at the forefront of her mind not allowing itself to be pushed away. This was different pain. This type was physical not mental. She wrapped her hand around her pain-stricken fingers. She clenched it tightly in hope of some form of relief but found none. She clenched her teeth together tightly and sucked in a rugged breath. She released her fingers and shook them fast, but that hurt her more. She didn't know what to do, she didn't know what she had done. The pain started to fade slightly and Nora got some feeling back in her fingers, she attempted to bend her fingers, and the pain returned suddenly, and it almost felt like that there was never

any improvement. She looked down at her fingers; two of her middle fingers were purple at the tips that held less pain than the white middle and bottom joints.

The pain overwhelmed her, she started to pant, and the stinging pain raged on inside her index finger, throbbing, she could feel her pulse being mirrored within it.

She just stared at her fingers breathing deeply only then did she realize that her hair was hanging over her face. Nora picked up a hair pin that was resting on her lap, she picked it up with her right hand them dropped it. Her right hand could not hold it up, and she was reminded of the pain in her fingers. She forgot about the hair pin and picked up her hat was sitting next to her after it feel of her head. She place it on top of her hair. She didn't care about how her hair looked she just didn't want her parents to get suspicious. Nora noticed her book lying next to her it was sitting opening up-side down. She reached across her body and picked it up with her left hand.

She started for a long time at the cover of the book. There was a subtle significants about the book that reminded her of her own life and how Jack and her fit the character profiles so well. Nora fought back the tears with no effort not caring if they spilled over her parents would find out any way her blotchy cheeks would give her away. She opened her car door with her book in her hand using her arms strength to push it open. She got out and walked around the back of the car looking up the street in the direction of Jack's house.

"Nora?" She heard her dad call from behind her "are you coming in?" Nora ignored him and began running up the street with the book still in her hands. Her hat fell of her head again her hair came loose but she didn't care. The wind made her eyes water and she ran against it. Further up the street she went getting closer and closer to his house. But at the same time to her it felt like she was still a hundred metres away. She grasped the book thinking over her plan in her head. What would she do if the front door was locked? Turn around and go home? What if she could find another way in? the back

door? Would she go around and take her chances their? Or will she give up and forget about it? What is she going to do if she gets into the house? She wasn't sure what exactly she was planning to do. She didn't know what she would find in his house or why she wanted to go there. Her feet were directing her and her mind was else where. Eventually she came to his house at the other end of his street. She ran straight up to the door grabbing at the door turning it before she stopped. If the door didn't open the she would have run straight into it. She let go of the handle and stood in open doorway. The house was dark lit by very little natural light that came through the cracks in the curtains.

As full the Finns house was with furniture it looked as empty as ever. Nora walked forward slowly looking around at the many walls covered with family portraits and priceless originals. Her footsteps echoed off the walls, her footsteps were downed out by the carpet on the staircases as she scented to the second floor and her breathing was the only sound in the house bouncing around the entrance hall it sound as if there was hundred people breathing

together at once. She looked at the procession of paintings of the Finns winding up next to the staircase. Each portrait had a small difference it was the way that they were standing next to one another or what they were wearing but each year Nora could see a difference in each of there appearances-Jack particularly. Each year he face would be longer, thinner his cheek cutting more and more across his face. His hair became richer, and his blue and green eye became darker until the most recent portrait-one dark jade eye and one deep blue eye.

The clarity pf the painting made Nora mad, she felt as if she was standing in front of him. His eyes were exactly as she remembered them. Flawlessly perfect. The correct shades that seemed to suite him so perfectly. Nora was anger that already her memory hadn't done him justice. It had only been three hours but already Nora was thinking on them a few shades lighter.

Nora thought that this would be the last time that she saw him. She looked into his eyes seeing the truth that was always there. She reached out and touched

his cheek with her hand pressing against until the serge of pain made her withdraw her hand. Almost in warning like her actions would bring her pain, and the physical side to it was like a mental note.

Suddenly she remember the book in her hand and she continued on to Jack's bedroom. She opened the door and went straight to his bed she threw her herself onto his bed burring her face into his pillows breathing in his scent that radiated off it. Her tears stained the material she lifted her head pulling her book up in front of her face looking at it. Thinking.

She slid off his bed letting her the book fall from her fingers. She kneeled on the ground elaning her head over his bed looking at the front cover of her book. She opened the front cover to the first page.

The title of the book 'Mansfield Park' scrolled across the front page seemed to bigger and bolder than Nora remembered. Almost mocking her like she was smaller that the book at it was laughing at her. Teasing her. A tear fell from her eye spilling onto the word 'Jane' the ivory paper changed colour to the salty water. Nora held onto the page of the book

gripping it tightly enjoying the pain in her finger. She tugged on the page and the frail binding on the spine worn with use allowed her to pull the page from the book with ease. She held the page up to her face then let it go it flittered down landing lightly on his bed Nora stood up quickly looking around his room. She spotted his desk in the opposite corner she ran to it frantically searching around the surface until she found what she was seeking. She didn't know how she was going to use without her hand hurting. It would turn out to messy that maybe he won't be able to read it. She returned to his bed she laid the book down of the book. Pressing down lightly holding it loosely so that she didn't hurt herself, she wrote.

When Nora was done she folded up the piece of paper. She had to put it somewhere for him to find it easily. Would he see it if she put it on his desk or would he not notice it amongst the clutter of papers that already inhabited it.

Maybe his bed its one of the first things that you see when you come into the room and he was bound to notice it. Nora folded the page in half and in half

again concealing away her message to Jack. For his eyes and his eyes only. Resting the note against his pillow she picked her book but like she was lifting a feather. She walked to the door looking back once at his room before running down the stairs ignoring the paintings of the walls. She ran out of the house stopping at the end of the path. She looked back at the extravagant house. Memories flooding her mind. Tears started to fall from her eyes.

She was really leaving him.

She wasn't sure when she would come back. If she every did. She didn't know if the next time she came back here she would be a Miss or Mrs. She wondered as she walked away from his house looing at it only from the corner of her eye become more and more behind her. Would anything change. Would Jack keep his promise and would she keep hers. She didn't know anything about New York and now it was about to become her new home. She didn't want to leave but as she passed the house on the street she knew that Columbia was growing more behind her now instead of in front her. She now saw New York.

What it bought her she would have to deal with. She could do that.

But Jack won't be there to reassure her, to hold her hand. The only thing that she had to remind her of Jack and that would do his job of reassuring her was her ring. Without Jack her hand felt weightless. As long as she wore the ring she would be with Jack.

Like she was carrying a piece of his heart with her, and she was taking is away from him. How would he cope?

But she knew that he would find some way. Jack was capable she knew that of him.

Walking back to her house slower than her usual pace, she wanted Jack. Nora felt alone but the small piece of him that she had keep close to her, made her feel like he was encouraging her.

She would miss him, But find someway to come back.

Because she was the future Mrs. Finn.

Chapter 15

The Socialite [14] Sarah Lawrence

Chapter Fourteen

Sarah Lawrence

“This is your room dear” said the kindly wispy-caramel haired women. She held the door open for Edmund as he carried Nora’s bags through the door, Nora slumping behind him. Edmund dropped the bags on the empty bed to the right of the door and turned around. Nora drooped on the hard bed screwing her face in discomfort. The bed was as hard as rock. It was going to be a long three years.

“Well” Edmund said “your roommate seems to be almost set up” he examined the other side of the

room the bed by the window was doused in pink material, a suitcase lay half empty by the end of the bed and the overhead shelf covered in different books some of which Nora recognised and some that looked like textbooks.

Nora moaned

“Oh I wonder who she is” Edmund said as an attempt to start conversation. He wasn’t happy at the situation and loathed his wife for doing this.

Just then Ethel walked through the door slamming it behind her blocking out the sound of many excited girls squealing in the hallways.

“Isn’t this place just lovely” she said in a tone that she was saving for Nora. It annoyed her. Ethel tossed something at Nora and it landed with a thud next to her head. “I got your books for you”-she said in cold tone-“and your timetable...you start classes at nine tomorrow morning”

Edmund opened her suitcase, then received a hard jab in the ribs from Ethel. He huffed and grimaced at Ethel aware that Nora saw the transaction “oh

right...” – he said trying to sound innocent but his voice was bitter -“we have to go” Nora sat up looking at her parents but her eyes told them that she wasn’t surprised. “You have the address?” Edmund asked, Nora nodded. He bent down and kissed her on the forehead.

“Okay... see you soon hopefully, the house isn’t to far away but I wouldn’t walk New York isn’t the safest place”

Ethel didn’t kiss Nora she edged slowly to the door, still facing Nora and opened it behind her, the sound of a hundred different voices talking at once filled the room. Nora jumped slightly due to shock.

“Fine” she said quietly, she knew that her mother didn’t want to stay. In fact Nora didn’t want to her stay.

“See you soon” Edmund said then walked to the door were Ethel looked around her at the passing girls through curious eyes.

“I’ll write to you” Nora said to Edmund who was now standing at the door holding Ethel’s hand.

“Honey” he smiled “That‘s good but you live like seven blocks away” Nora smiled to but there was no sincerity in it. She was doing it out of reflex rather then courtesy “But that would be great” Edmund said “Jack too?”

Nora smiled instantly faded when her father mentioned Jacks name. He didn’t mean for it to slip out of his lips Ethel was smirking to herself.

“No” Nora said, she didn’t blink, she looked away from her farther out the window across the room.

“Sorry…” he muttered quietly “Goodbye dear”

Edmund disappeared from sight Ethel close behind him, and Nora was alone. She didn’t hear the door swing close and got a fright when it closed. She focussed back in and looked around the room again.

She was finally here, Sarah Lawrence. And Nora didn’t know whether to laugh or cry.

This place was both more amazing and more miserable then she had imagined. Amazing because it was every everything that she had every hoped for.

It was what she had whished for nine years of her life.

It was miserable, because Jack wasn't there… it wasn't her dream any more, Sarah Lawrence was now a nightmare.

The door slowly opened Nora snapped her head to watch a small girl enter the room holding a pile of books.

The girl noticed Nora sitting next to her suitcase and her eyes widened "Oh.." her voice sharp "You must be my roommate"

Nora looked down and straightened her dress "Yes. I'm Nora Greenhill" she smiled and the girl smiled back

"Hi" she looked away and directed her attention to putting her books on her bed. Nora looked briefly at their spines, and she could tell that they were more textbooks. "I'm Emily King"

Nora smiled again "Hi" Nora didn't know what to say, but she felt she had too. Moments passed, and the

only sound in the room was sliding books across wood.

Luckily for Nora she didn't have to start the conversation "So where are you from?" Emily asked.

Where are you from? Why did she have to ask that? She could have asked about what classes she has or the view from their room. But she had to ask one of the questions that Nora wanted to avoid. Not because she was embarrassed about where she came from but because that was where Jack was, and where she wasn't

"Uh…Columbia" Nora said cringing at the sting her throat when she said 'Columbia'

Emily nodded

"You?" Nora asked her voice shaking, hoping that Emily didn't notice her uncomfortableness with the topic.

Emily didn't notice anything "Seattle"

"My!" was all Nora could say in response; Emily pressed her lips together and nodded

“I know”

“That‘s a very long way to come just for school!”

Emily’s shrill laughs filled the room “I know”she said again “All the way across that country”

Nora nodded, she was pleased that the subject wasn’t focussed on her, and now that she looked at Emily closely she could see what type of girl she was.

Emily was beautiful; she had bright green eyes were only one of her beautiful features that stood out. Her light brown hair was a shade that Nora hadn’t see before and shone with red in the sunlight that came in through the window. Her nose was long and slim, it fit perfectly on her face, and her small full lips were a rich pink colour.

Nora didn’t feel so uncomfortable any more. She felt at ease talking to Emily, like they were life-long friends.

Emily’s charisma was radiating around her touching Nora. She already liked her, she had a feeling that she would be great friends with her and that she could trust her.

Nora knew that she could tell her anything, and from only sharing no more than a few words with her, and that told her something.

“I wouldn‘t go that far for school.” Nora shook her head “Not worth it”

A small smile flickered at the corners of Emily’s lips “But I would” she looked at Nora in the eyes and a flash of seriousness crossed her face.

“Your upper-class I bet?”

Nora pressed her lips together and nodded “Yes” she said quietly.

“Of course ” Emily said, her tone implied no surprise. “My family is strictly middle-class. We came from a normal middle-class neighbourhood. I went to a normal middle-class school, and of course a normal middle-class education. I have only my parents to thank for everything that I have. They gave me everything, even though they couldn‘t give me much. If you don‘t me asking, how you got in this school?”

Nora shook her head “I…uh, didn‘t want to go here. In fact I was enrolled at the University of South

Carolina, and then… my mother…" Nora shook her head again "Sorry I don‘t like to talk much about the rest of it"

"That's fine" Emily said quietly "I was quiet smart at my school, I was class president and valedictorian. My parents saw my intelligents as a gift and they wished so dearly to nurture it, but they didn‘t have the money to support me. I told them that I didn‘t have to continue in school, but they thought that it was just a waist. So when they herd of the different scholarships that the school offered, they insisted straight away that I apply. I was not so confident but my parents reassured me, and I guess that I was lucky enough to get in" Emily huffed a laugh "I guess luck isn‘t the right word"

Nora raised her eyebrows and re-positioned herself on the bed, Emily noticed this.

"What?" she asked perplexed

Nora sighed "Well… luck could almost be the ‘right word‘" Emily could here the quotation marks in her voice "I know that if it wasn‘t for luck I wouldn‘t be here." Nora rolled her eyes and mumbled- still loud

enough for Emily to hear “Not that I‘m quiet happy to be here anyway”

Nora looked at Emily who wore a baffled expression “My mother- as strange as this will sound- wrote my application for me” Emily’s expression change throughout all forms of confused. Mystified. Bewildered. Confounded. Bemused. Puzzled.

“What” she managed to get out “Your mother filled out your application?”

Nora nodded “I know… it‘s weird. Now I guess I don‘t know who they accepted. Me? Or my mother?”

“Can she even do that?”

“I guess, if I got accepted on the application, it doesn’t really matter?” she shrugged. “I bet my mom slipped a hundred-dollar bill into the envelope before she sent it off” she laughed once then cringe at her accusation.

“Why did your mother do that?” Emily asked quietly.

Her question was rhetorical. Nora knew the exact reason why her mother did what she did.

When Emily noticed Nora hesitation she knew that it was much more than the importance of her schooling. Emily nodded “What‘s his name?” she asked.

“Jack” Nora said lowering her head, saying his name left a dry sting in her throat. “He…he was my best friend. I‘ve known him since I was six- before then even. We‘d never be apart, we spent every minute together” Nora edited her story for Emily. She felt that it wasn’t her business to know what happened in the middle. But, she also felt like she was betraying Jack if she said anything. She didn’t know why but it was her instinct telling her what to say. It was her head not her heart.

Emily smiled “I know what you mean… my best friend Chanelle is still in Seattle. I almost didn’t want to come because of her. But she supported me, and I know that I be back there soon”

“It is a different situation with Jack though; he was going to attend the university of Sought Carolina- with me as well- until things got complicated. His best friend got drafted into the army and he joined

up with him so that he wouldn't be alone. I know that it loyal- but to me it's just stupid. I would give anything to hold him in my arms right now. I miss him so much" Nora's yearning left an ache in her heart. "Before I came here with my family, he proposed and…he promised that he would wait for me" Nora sluggishly held out her left hand, Emily slowly walked over to look at the ring on her finger.

"It's beautiful" she sighed. "You came here with your family? here?" she looked up from Nora hand with one eyebrow raised.

"Not campus, their house is a few blocks away. Why? Where are your parents? Are they staying on campus? I didn't know that they could do that."

Emily shook her head "No they aren't here, their still in Seattle"

"Oh" Nora said quietly "Why not"

"Because they couldn't afford it, and I have two younger brothers still in school. My parents didn't think that it would do them any good if they had to change schools. Then they would have to find a new

house, new school, new social circle. They couldn‘t really handle it I don‘t think. But I don’t really care… sure I miss them already, but they still are living in the same house that I grew up in and that‘s the most important thing to me. I may not have been as rich as some- not saying that your arrogant” Emily held up her hands in defence as she moved back to her bed “but I had a great life growing up. We had the biggest backyard in our street and I would play out there till dark with my two brothers. At dinner we listen to out father talk about his day -as that may seem boring, I loved it. Then after we’d all sit together and take turns reading from one of my fathers many books, that he got when he was a child. And on some nights my mother would sing to us while we fell asleep together on the sofa‘s. she had the sweetest voice you‘d every hear.” Nora was so involved in Emily ‘s story that she was annoyed when she was back in reality and Emily had stopped talking.

Nora wondered what it would be like to be Emily. She pictured herself playing in her backyard with two boys that she knew as her brothers. She imagined herself sitting around the dinner table talking and

laughing. Sitting together reading, then falling asleep while her mother sung her songs.

That's what a real family is like, and Nora's felt resentful of hers. From everything that she had, she would trade it all for what Emily had. Maybe even a little brother or sister.

Nora knew that her family was nothing like that. She wanted that, she wanted her family like that. But now she had her chance at a family. She wasn't going to wreck it- like her mother had.

Nora moaned softly "That sound so amazing" she admitted "I would trade everything I have to have that kind of family"

Emily held up her hands quickly "Oh don't believe I'm telling you to much into my life. That stuff may have happened but we did struggle often. Especially when the depression hit. we didn't have any money in the stock market, but we still had to sell some items to put food on the table most weeks. I think we were lucky. Compares to some of my friends who lost just about everything."

“Oh…” Nora said “Sorry”

Emily shrugged “It‘s alright I knew- and told myself so constantly everyday that if we were to lose everything, I would still have the ones I love. My family” Nora managed to push a smile up at the corners of her lips.

“I only wish that my family were that great” she said monotonously. Silently praying that they could be, but she knew that the reality was set in stone.

Nora and Emily spent the rest of the afternoon and most of the night talking about one another. Discussing such things as school and subjects, friends and hobbies. Nora had learned nearly everything that there was to know about Emily by the time that they said there goodnights and had gone to bed.

Falling asleep that night was impossible. Lying on her hard mattress, trying to find a comfortable sleeping position was difficult. No part of the mattress fitted the contours of her body.

She stared up at the roof, attempting to make out sealing in the darkness of the room. Her back arched,

her hands clawing into the mattress, she breathed slowly and quietly. Breathing in time with Emily's humble breaths, that she could only hear as a whisper from across the room. Nora turned her head as felt slight at ease, as her head was the on thing resting on a soft cloud like surface.

She was sure that after a while she would get used to the mattress but only time would tell.

Her eye saw a small break in the curtains that draped the window next to her bed. Silver moonlight spilled in through the opening. Covering a small portion of the floor with silver liquid-like luminosity.

The was a small pause in Emily's breaths as she turned over on her back, the her breathing picked up again.

Nora did like Emily and was assured that she would assist Nora unknowingly during her stay at the college.

She was kind and honest. Nora was sure that she would be the closest thing to a sister if she got to know her more.

Nora tried to close her eyes offering her self to the realm of dreams, but nothing would work for her.

She knew why she wasn't falling asleep. It wasn't the mattress, or the light coming in the room. It wasn't homesickness, or over tiredness.

She was tried.

It was Jack. She missed him so much that it I was costing her sleep.

One day down. God only knows how many left. And how many would she go on without Jack? She tried once more in hopes of slumber. Closing her eyes to see the swirling colours of green, red, yellow and blue move around in front her enclosed behind her eyelids.

And surely enough her prayers were answered.

Nora was standing on the grassy field that was close to her student house, in the dark of night. Wearing her nightgown, her hair and dress was being pushed back by the crisp night air. She watched the trees on the other side of the field sway from side to side being pushed in the breeze. She watched as Jack

approached her up the path, she smiled at him and waited for him to stop in front of her so that she could kiss him. But he never did. He never stopped, he didn’t even look at her as he walked straight past her continuing to walk, off the path across the field. He didn’t break stride, Nora turned and watched him walk away

“Jack” Nora called but he didn't turn around “Come back!” Nora started to run to keep up with him. Her bear feet became cold and wet from the grass as she followed Jack.

“Wait” she called “Slow down” her feet suddenly hit something hard and cold and she realized that she was now running across concrete. She could only scarcely make out the silhouette of a building in the moonless night.

“Wait I…I don‘t know this part of campus” she squinted ahead of herself Jack was know where to be seen. He had vanished from her sight, and she was lost. Trapped with the labyrinth of college buildings “Jack” Nora said starting to panic “Don't leave me” She shouted.

Her eyes began to weld up with tears “You can't” Nora whimpered, the tears began to spill over. She knelt down and curled up pulling her knees around her chest. She lay on the cold, wet concrete amongst the building. She tarted to rock herself, and a crack of thunder pierced the silence of the night and rain started to fall.

“You promised” she cried “Come back” tears blotted her cheeks but she didn’t bother to wipe them away. “Come back” she repeated over and over “Come back, come back. Please”

Nora woke suddenly, to light pouring over her face. She gasped and tried of focus her eyes on roof. She finally focussed in and looked around the room.

Emily was standing at the end of her bed buttoning her dress, she looked up briefly at Nora and flashed her a smile.

Nora didn’t noticed yesterday how compact and tiny the room actually was. Fitting in two beds, two desks, and two dressers, it made the room almost claustrophobic. Nora moaned and pushed her covers off her.

“Morning” she herd Emily say quietly, as she pulled several books down from the shelf above her bed.

“Are you alright?” she asked curiously, Nora stopped and looked at her through the curtain of her hair that covered her face.

“Sure” Nora lied, her voice dry.

Emily frowned “Are you sure?” she raised both her eye brows “you didn’t‘ seem to have slept well, last night. To me, I mean. it didn‘t seem like you were having a good-dream”

Nora’s eyes widened, she walked to Emil. Her expression had changed to concern. Nora pushed her hair off her face.

“This might sound weird- or it might not” she began “Did I, sleep talk? Because I‘ve been known to do that…on occasion” she defended herself.

Emily light pressed her lips together. “I not going to pretend that I didn‘t hear anything. But I wont tell anybody.” Emily reached out and took Nora hand balancing her books in her left arm. “If you don‘t want to talk about it then that‘s perfectly fine with

me. But if you want to then we can talk tonight" she smiled and dropped Nora's hand.

"Thank-you" Nora whispered "for understanding"

Emily nodded and walked to the door, she opened it and the sound of panicking girls filled the room.

Emily turned back to Nora "You must love him a lot" she said, then walked out of the door closing it behind herself.

The first day of classes was a blur. Nora tried to find her away around campus but it was so big that she kept getting lost.

She made it to her first class with barley a minute to spare. She shuffled in to the first available seat that she could find and the end of the isle in the third row up. She put her book on the desk then looked up to see who she had sat down next to. Her neighbour was a lot rounder in the face then her with silvery-blond hair that was shoulder length.

"Quiet please" said a short balding man at the front of the room, and as he spoke the hum of voices slowly "American history. I am Professor. Pell and I

will be your professor for the duration of this class throughout the next three years. You have been selected for the class of nineteen-forty-one‘s, and the special placement program. Mind me to remind you again- what you would have heard yesterday at orientation. That you have been given an opportunity. You are the future of America, and let me say that every member of the faculty expects very highly of you.

Anyway, this semester we will be learning about the first-Americans or native Americans so can you please open you textbooks to page thirty-one” he turned and wrote across the top of the calk board. American history

Professor. Pell seemed like a nice enough man, but Nora still wasn’t sure enough if she’ll end-up getting along with him. She would soon find out.

The topic of American history always fascinated Nora, but learning about things that she already knew was tiering.

Native Americans in the United States are the indigenous peoples from the regions of North America

Nora read, in silence along with the rest of the people in the room. Mr. Pell cleared his throat.

“Now from what you read, can anybody tell me- even as an estimate- how many years ago did the first native Americans roam the land?”

Nora looked around and was shocked to noticed that nobody had put their hands up yet. She gulped and her stomach did a back-flip and she slowly raised her hand above her head. Her neighbour’s eyes widened. Professor. Pell saw her and smiled.

“Yes you?” his hand gestured to her. Everybody in the looked at her the people in the first two rows turned around in their seats to look at her. Nora blushed, her cheek filling with blood, flushing her face a soft crimson.

“Yes?” Professor. Pell pressed.

Nora felt like her tongue was glue to the top of her mouth. She couldn‘t speak “uh… um” she studded

“well… the native Americans date back to twelve-thousand years…when they opened pre-Columbian passages from Eurasia” every face in the room stared blankly at her. She looked away sheepishly, pretending to find her place in the book.

Professor. Pell laughed “Exactly. That is exactly right, what Miss?” he raised his eye brows at Nora.

“Uh, Greenhill. Nora Greenhill” she said quietly.

“Miss Greenhill” he continued “What she has explained to us, is a good explanation of just exactly how far back we can date Native Americans. That is exactly”

After that class the rest of the day seemed to drag by for Nora. She couldn’t find Emily at lunch time, but was lucky enough to have her two afternoon classes with her.

“Well, first day was interesting” Emily said as they walked back to there dorm together, at the end of the day.

“Mm…” Nora agreed not really interested in conversation.

The after noon sun was blocked by the opposite of the student building. Beautiful shade of peach and purple streaked across the sky.

Nora immediately dropped her books on her bed as soon as she got through the door.

“Hey I wanted to ask you something” Emily said quietly “because you know I‘m new to the city- and you too I was just wondering, if you wanted to go out for dinner tonight”

Nora smiled instantly, she liked the idea. “That would be great, it would give me a chance to get to know you better”

“Exactly…the cab driver that drove me here told me about a place in Yonkers. Supposed to be very nice, it‘s Italian. ‘La Bella’ I think he said”

Nora smiled, she slumped down on her bed. “So what time are we going?”

Emily and Nora managed to evade the roaming teachers in the halls. Outside it was much too cool for an August night. Nora squeezed the edges if her coat together and pulled it tighter around her shoulders.

Their shoes clanked together as they walked in unison down the sidewalk. The overhanging street lights cast there shadows as they approached and drowned the out as the passed.

“I think it‘s one block over?” said Emily “actually I‘m not that sure the cab driver didn‘t give me that many instructions, when he asked me to go with him” she shuddered at the memory.

“I‘m actually starting to get hungry” Nora said smiling, they crossed the street and rounded the corner.

Emily pointed ahead to sign saying La Bella- open seven o‘clock till late “Uh… see, I did find it.”

Nora laughed “I didn‘t doubt you” she lied sarcastically.

“Sure you didn‘t”

They walked in the door and were swamped with warmth, stopping at the matree-d’s podium. A tall, slender male, with jet-black hair was shuffling through pieces of paper. He briefly looked up at them, smiled then continued to shot through the

pages. He rested the papers on the podium when he was done and looked up at the girls, placing a pair of glasses on the tip of his nose.

“Hello, welcome to La Bella” he said in an over-polite tone, he looked at Nora up and down, noticing the bracelet on her wrist and the ring on her fingers. He smiled again “How may I assist you tonight?”

Emily was the first to speak “Hello” she said, meeting his tone of over-politeness, clearly just to mock him. “Table for two”

The man studied them, considering the possibility of them as a couple.

He smiled once more “Right this way” picking up two menu’s from the podium, he lead them through the labyrinth of restaurant tables. He sat them near the end, there table was close to the bar.

“Can I get you any drinks?” the matree-d asked, as they were taking their seats, but his voice was slightly drowned out over the noise of everyone in the room talking at once. It wasn’t a big restaurant now that Nora looked around. It was quiet small and

there were a lot of table crammed into it at once. Nora noticed that her one table number was forty-one.

“Can I get you any drinks?” he said again louder, in Nora’s ear, though it was hardly necessary.

“Uh, white wine thank-you” Nora said back in his ear, louder than his own tone.

“One white wine and…” he turned to Emily “What drink can I get you?” he said to her.

“Um… the same”

The matree-d straightened up “Alright. Here are your menus” he handed them the menu’s “And your waiter will be here shortly with your drinks”

Nora watched as the matree-d walked off to the bar to ask the bar-man for the drinks, then he retuned to the podium.

“This place is nice” Nora said turning back to Emily .

She smiled in agreement “yes it is. I‘m just happy that it’s a real place- the creep was right” she laughed once.

“Excuse me” said a blond waiter “this if from the gentlemen over there” the waiter gestured to a man sitting across the restaurant at the end of the bar, as he sat the gin and tonic on a napkin next to Emily. Then he rested Nora’s drink next to her. She took it sheepishly in her hand instantly drink a large quantity from the glass.

Emily smiled then looked past Nora’s head at the man. He raised his glass at her then took a drink from it. Emily copied him and smiled.

Nora turned around in her seat to get a glimpse at the man. He was slightly older then she had anticipated. His dark brown eyes were the same colour as his hair and moustache. He looked oddly familiar to Nora but she didn’t know why she though that.

“Who is that man” Emily said, Nora turned around with a plain expression and shrugged.

“I don‘t know”

Emily smiled softly “He is awful charming, is he not?” After their conversation Emily looked back at the bar but the man was gone, her heart sank.

“It‘s alright. I didn‘t even know the man, so what difference dose it make” she shrugged.

They ate in silence when their food arrived quicker then Nora would have thought in and over crowed, busy restaurant like this. She speared her potato gnocchi, chewed on it quickly then swallowed.

“did you have a …” Nora tried to think of a good conversation starter “Pet?” it was the first thing that came into her head.

Emily smiled and swallowed her piece of chicken, it burned her throat “yes” it took a large gulp of her drink to sooth the sting “I did. We had a cat, it was a girl and we named her…. ”

“That‘s nice” Nora said looking down at her plate “I never got to have a pet. My parents would allow it. But I did play with the stray dog that walked around near my house. My parents didn‘t know I did. They would have liked it”

They quickly finished off their meals, flowing through different topics of discussion.

When they left Emily turned and walked the other way.

“Where are you going” Nora called “I thought it was this way” Emily turned around to her continuing to walk back wards she held up her hand. As Nora slowly walked foreword her suspicions grew as too what was in her hand. When she was close enough she could see that it was a cigarette packet.

Nora cringed.

“Oh sorry dose it bother you” Emily said before she touched the match to the cigarette .

Nora slowly and carefully shook her head “Not really” she lied convincingly- for once.

Emily lit her cigarette she took a long and slow breath in, then blew out. “Oh sorry” she said as her cigarette smoke blew into Nora’s face.

Nora took an unnecessary cough, she made not attempt to smile. “that‘s alright. I‘ll just have to stay

up-wind of you" she tried her best at a fake-smile- and failed- as she moved around Emily from left to right.

Nora looked up the street. It was dimly lit from the few street lights.

Everything here was different. The streets, with many people lining the them sprawling late into the night.

The people. They were rude and selfish. Smoking, drinking liquor with cheap women rubbing up against them.

Nora was out of her element, and was sure that is she were raised here. Columbia would seem out of her world to her. So she really wasn't one to judge that this was the way that people functioned here.

But she didn't belong here. She belonged in the place she was familiar with.

Her home.

The place that she had left so suddenly that she didn't get a chance to really say goodbye to the people she loved.

Even the stars here were different. Nora was still in the same hemisphere, but she felt like she was being blanketed differently by the stars. They were barely visible through the haze of dusky light- that still managed to cloud them out.

"Hello" she heard a deep voice say behind her. She turned to see the man from the bar talking to Emily. "Got a light" he said with crooked smile.

Emily smiled, she reached into her purse and pulled out a small box of matches. She lightly placed it in his hand, there eyes met and she smiled again.

"Thank-you" he said.

Emily put her box back in her purse, "Your welcome"

The man dropped the match on the ground and stepped on it with his foot "What's your name?"

Emily was fixated on him "Emily"

"Emily. Emily what?"

She laughed once quietly “King. Emily King” she finished her cigarette, she it fall to the ground, stepping it on the ground.

“Richard” the man said gesturing to himself “Richard Doyle”

Nora know knew why he looked so familiar. She had met him once. A week ago. At her parents house when they had just got here.

“Richard Doyle” Nora said speaking for the first time.

He nodded, “Yes?”

“The New York social-light? Your family is the richest family in Westchester!” Nora exclaimed.

Richard laughed “I have so say that you haven‘t caught me off guard” he gestured from Emily to Nora.

Emily’s eye’s widened “Oh sorry. Richard this is Nora” she pointed to Nora.

Nora pressed a smile “It‘s nice to meet to officially-for the second time” she shook Richard’s hand looking at his perplexed expression.

“I mean we have met before” Nora elaborated. “You came over to my parents house, I think a week ago. We have just moved here”

“Oh yes” Richard said smiling “Greenhill?” he raised his left brow.

“Yes” Nora said looking away to Emily she leaned into her ear and whispered “I‘m going back, you stay and chat. Good luck.”

Emily smiled uncertain, Nora nodded in encouragement.

She turned to face Richard “It was very nice to meet you, again.” she shook his hand again “I am going to start heading back now” she smiled, bowed her head then turned. Her eye locked with Emily’s, they were scared, but Nora’s reassured her. She began to walk up the street.

“Good night Nora Greenhill” she heard Richard call.

It was dark in her room when she returned. She quickly changed and got into her bed falling asleep quickly.

Nora was standing on the grassy field that was close to her student house, in the dark of night. Wearing her nightgown, her hair and dress was being pushed back by the crisp night air. She watched the trees on the other side of the field sway from side to side being pushed in the breeze. She watched as Jack approached her up the path, she smiled at him and waited for him to stop in front of her so that she could kiss him. But he never did. He never stopped, he didn’t even look at her as he walked straight past her continuing to walk, off the path across the field. He didn’t break stride, Nora turned and watched him walk away. This was all familiar to her, she already had this dream the night before

“Jack” Nora called but he didn't turn around “I don’t know where your going, but I know I’ll get lost is I try to follow you” he ignored her and keep walking. Nora started to run to keep up with him. Her bear feet became cold and wet from the grass as she followed Jack. She tripping over her feet and fell to the ground. She keep her face buried, she did want to get up.

Just then she woke up, Emily was changing in front of her bed. “Sorry did I wake you” she whispered.

Nora shook her head, her throat stung and her head was spinning. “I just got in, it‘s after mid-night.” she sighed as she climbed into her bed “Richard is so amiable, we went back into the restaurant, and just talked.” she yawned “I‘m so tried I‘ll tell you everything in the morning” she laid her head down on her pillow and fell asleep.

Nora rested her head into her pillow, she stared up at the roof and remembered over her dream. She didn’t like it, it scared her thought of Jack leaving her behind, and not coming back for her. She didn’t want think what I meant, that scared her even more. She didn’t notice as she slipped into unconsciousness, and dreams took over her.

Chapter 16

The Socialite [15] Reminder

Chapter Fifteen

Reminder

His face was so serene, so peaceful she had never seen anything like it before. Never once where is so soft under the touch of her finger.

Jack.

To her he would always be perfect.

At peace.

Is that what they call it? His face looked peaceful, but Nora saw beyond the expression, he was hurting. More then ever, not be standing be side her. Instead

Nora was looking down upon Jack lifeless body, helpless lost against it will to fight to hang on but eventually defeated. No tears were to be shed; she couldn't find it in her heart to do something so productive when all she wanted to do was to look at his face until she became old, and finally die next to him. But it wouldn't come quick enough to sooth the sting in her heart. Her throat was dry, it stung.

He was gone

There was nothing that she could do; there was no way to turn back time.

It was done. He was never coming back to her.

She slowly stroked the side of his face from forehead to chin. The temperature threw her off and made her stomach churn.

A black threatening fog swept over Nora and concealed her sight of Jack. After it had passed Nora she dropped her hands away from her eyes, but Jack wasn't there anymore. The fog had taken him with it, and now he was gone

“Jack” Nora said, she starting to run after him, in the direction the fog has gone, but there was nothing to be acquired. She kept running and eventually ran into the fog. She couldn’t see far in front of herself.

She found him.

Standing before her where the fog depleted, in a pool of light.

Breathing. Living. Loving.

More beautiful than she had every seen him. The light radiated off his skin offsetting the colour, making it milkier. He held his hand out to her, and smiled crookedly. Nora reached out for his hand, she went to take a step forward but she wasn’t able too. She was stuck.

On the border between the fog and the light. She was in the dark. She relied on Jack taking her into the light like he always had. But now, he couldn’t. She couldn’t.

She held out her hand to him. Pushing if forward as far as she could, closer to him. After a while Jack slowly dropped his hand.

“Jack!” she said “I’m here! Come on, take my hand” Jack looked at her and hand sighed. “Well?” she asked stating to get anxious “Come on, take my hand”

His face was sorry and apologetic; he slowly turned around and walked away. The light followed him and left Nora behind

“Jack?” Nora said struggle through the dark to catch up to the light “No, Jack! Come back, you have to take me with you” she stopping running and watched as the light disappeared taking Jack with it.

Nora suddenly woke to another swarm of light. Morning. She rolled over to look at Emily, she was still sleeping in her bed.

Immediately Nora could feel an annoying routine forming. Morning. School she sat in the back row listening and answering questions when asked. She retired to her room, did her homework and went to bed. Ate, drank and slept, like every other student, with the exception of Emily’s newly forming schedule

She soon after, became attached to Richard. He would surprise her with expensive gifts, take her out to

romantics dinners, in Manhattan. They spent nearly all of their time together- when Emily wasn't in class. Nora wasn't at all surprised when Richard asked her to marry him after only two months.

They wanted to jump straight into their new life together and got married in November. Nora was surprised when she was asked herself to be a bridesmaid, she accepted and helped out any way she could on the big day. She mostly just held the flowers while Emily's best friend from Seattle, calmed her and tried to reassure her about the marriage. But once Emily enter the church and saw Richard waiting at the end of the isle, all of her time that she had spent worry quickly evaporated.

While Nora watched them-say their vows to one another, 'I do', then kiss each other fiercely once they were announced husband and wife- she couldn't help but think if she would ever get her chance. Have a beautiful wedding in a beautiful church with beautiful flowers. But would she get the chance to walk down the isle towards the most beautiful groom.

What was it like to Jack living without her? Was he coping?

What would she know… she could only ever image what it would be like in the army?

He frequently wrote her letters telling her of his experiences, even thought his letter all had a return address she couldn't find it in her heart to write back.

My love, he wrote;

I miss you, and with each new day that comes is only day further away since I last held you in my arms and told that I loved you. My heart yearns for you constantly and sometimes is hard to concentrate. We had finished basic training, I have been taught to kill a man but I never want to have to use my skills. I may face death at some possible time, though I don't fear him, I know that he will be no ally to me. We are now in out new army base; it's in Hawaii, a place called Pearl Harbour. A darling place, but one I never want you to see. I have met some knew men, one of them grew up in France and moved here with his father. He tells me of green pasters stretching out as

far as the eye can see, it sounds beautiful. When this is behind us we'll go to France and live there.

The stars here may be the same- as I am under the same hemisphere- but they don't blanket me with love and warmth like they do at home.

When I return, I hope you can forgive me, and I hope that you can understand why I did this. I didn't mean to prove anything to you, if that to what you feel then you need to understand the love I feel for you.

This may sound ill-mannered of me, but if your heart no longer allies with mine. I will completely understand. I wish you the best of lives and kind regards. But I should let you now that I will never stop loving you.

You will be a constant in my mind, and will I think about before I go to sleep and you'll be the first thing I ponder when I wake up.

I will always love you

Jack .

She thought about the last sentence in the letter, I will always love you; Nora couldn't help but think if she had made the right choice to not writ back to him.

She folded the piece of paper up and slid it underneath her pillow she looked across the room at her desk, and felt the emptiness of the room.

Emily was gone.

She still attended school here, but she has moved in with Richard. The janitors had come the next to take her bed out of the room give Nora more space.

She stared at her desk that has once been the place where Emily's bed had stood. She closed her eye and let her dreams take her. Awaiting tomorrow.

Chapter 17

The Socialite [16] Damages

Two months later…

January 1942

Chapter Sixteen

Damages

Slowly moving her brush through her hair she . She picked up her bathroom things and headed out the door to go to the bathroom.

“Nora!” Came a booming voice. She stopped in the middle of the hallway, she turned around stumbling back a few paces. Something ran into the side ov her

knocking her over yelping as her head hit the ground.

“Ouch” she said, looking up quickly to see the boy that had hit her “Get off me” she yelled trying to push him aside but he wouldn’t move. He was staring into her eyes.

He slid off the side of her and held out his right hand showing his scar.

“My fault.” he said slowly. Scrambling to his feet keeping his arm extended “Here let me help you up”

“Well it‘s the least you can do after knocking me over” she said curtly Taking his hand. He pulled her up to her feet with ease, grabbing his suitcase as he stood. Jack pressed his hand into her harder so that their scars were touching. She felt, looked up to see the face of who had knocked her over.

The boy was Jack.

He didn’t look different to her, his eyes were still the same one green on blue, his hair was the same light blond Expect one difference; he was wearing an army uniform. But other than that…

He was the same.

And He was perfect.

. By now everyone in the surrounding dorms were peeking their heads out of the halls to catch their glimpse.

“Jack” she whispered, pulling her hand away from his.

Jack smiled and nodded “Hello Nora” his voice smooth and calm. He didn’t want to scare her. But right now he was hoping that she was happy to see her because her expression was unreadable.

A smile appeared on her Nora face, she fell into his arms.

“Oh Jack” she said into his chest. “I though I‘d never see you again…I’m so sorry, I’m sorry I didn’t writ back to you” Jack pulled her closer into his chest. So that she was perfectly in sync with his body. He bent his head down to her and she filled in the distance. They kissed on the lips slowly, softly but passionately, completely blocking out the clapping that came from the spectators.

They parted slowly opening there eyes to be mesmerised in the other persons “It’s alright I’m sure you had your reasons, and if you want to tell the to me or not, that’s up to you”

Nora was too overwhelmed that he was here, but how long would they have together before he had to leave.

Together in each others arms they slowly moved back into Nora’s room pushing the doors opening with their bodies. The clapping became muffled when they closed the door.

“I missed you” he said, throwing the flowers that were in his hand down on the ground, their interrupting presence would ruin this moment for him.

A tear built up in Nora’s eye it spilt over and she relied on Jack to wipe it away.

“I‘m surprised that you didn‘t hear me earlier, I was running around this student house calling your name!” he said pulling her onto her bed. She rested her head on chest.

“A lot of the girls in the house like to protest” Nora paused “I thought that they were saying ‘No more’ ‘No more’” Jack couldn’t see where she would have gotten that mixed up.

“Weren‘t you going to brush your teeth” Jack interjected gesturing to her tooth brush that she was squeezing tightly. Nora looked down at her hand and blushed.

“Right…I guess that could help’ she stood up, parting from Jack, he could see that she didn’t want but it was a good idea. Why didn’t he think of that before himself?

“I‘ll…be right back” she said walking quickly from the room. Jack sat silently on her bed he sat his suitcase down next to him, looking around the room.

There was only on bed at least he wouldn’t have to worry about her roommate getting in the way. A desk sat on the far wall covered with papered and pens. Over head on a shelf he noticed that half the shelf contained what looked like textbooks.

A marron book with biology written on the side helped him with that. The other half of her shelf held books that he recognized. But one book wasn't there.

'Mansfield park' wasn't on her shelf he looked else where around her room but it wasn't there. Where was it?

He sat down on her bed and turned on the lamp to brighten the room up a bit more. He saw something small. A square of ivory material that he recognized from her be sheet that he had in his suitcase.

The it looked different. He could see that it had stitching on it. He turned it over to look at it on the front. It was a picture-stitched not drawn- onto the piece of cloth. Jack wasn't sure but he thought that the picture was of him and Nora. There was a lot of green around them and he assumed that they were in the forest. Jack was amazed at the quality of the stitching that from far away it could have been a photo- except in colour.

Jack didn't know that she knew how to do tapestry. Maybe it was something that she learned here.

he held the piece of sheet tightly in his hands, and then he realised just how much he had miss her.

Like she was listening to his thoughts she came into the room.

“Sorry it was pretty crowded in the bathroom and a few of my friends wanted to know about you”

Jack smiled crookedly stuffing the tapestry into his pocket without noticing “What did you tell them?”

Nora looked away with a smiled on her lips she skipped over to her bed and worked herself in around his body resting her head on his chest again.

“That you are the most her perfect guy in the world, and that you are so made for me”

Jack kissed her on the head “Did you tell them that we were engaged”

Nora grinned but Jack couldn’t see it “I‘m glad that you haven‘t forgotten” Nora said holding up her left hand that his grandmothers engagement ring was sitting on.

“I‘ll tell you something though” she said half laughing “it‘s been sort-of hard to try and hide this…I mean the most of the girls here are nice but I wouldn‘t invite them to our wedding”

Jack kissed her on the head and breathed “Whatever makes you happy”

“It feels like I never left” she paused “I mean we are taking off right where we finished…it‘s like nothing had change” she may not have been looking at him but Nora could feel the change in his hold on her.

“What is it?” Nora asked.

Jack relieved his fingers “Nothing…it‘s just overwhelming to see you that’s all. I‘ve missed you” he kissed her again.

“So what’s been going on in Columbia. Tell me everything, I want to know”

Jack tried to pick his words carefully “School‘s good, my parents are well. Oh um… did you here that Aloise got married to Benjamin?” Jack asked.

Nora half smiled “Yes I heard that. Good for him” Nora was idly happy the day she herd of the marriage of Benjamin and Aloise. She was glad that he had found someone as self absorbed as him. She must have married him for the money and him for the same reason. Not that it was her business but she wondered if either of them actually loved the other one. But they were made for each other and she was sure that her twin would soon be married as well.

“That‘s about it” Jack said abruptly “So…you have a room to yourself, is that at special request of you mother” Jack laughed, Nora grimaced but Jack couldn’t see her-though he knew that she was.

Jack wrapped his arms around her and pulled her back, further up the bed till his back was resting against the wall.

“No” Nora said “Everybody here has to share with someone”

“Why do you have the room to yourself then?” he said looking around the room, it looked bigger than he had first thought but there wasn’t much trace of a pervious tenant.

“My roommate Emily got married- she still goes to school, her husband wouldn’t let her leave. But she lived with him- they took the bed out to give me room. Their very accommodating here” Nora bought her legs up to her chest and repositioned herself around Jack.

“Were is ‘Mansfield Park’? I thought that you’d have it out…I mean I don’t see it on your book self” Jack extended his arm out in front of him to show Nora that he was pointing too her bookshelf above “I didn‘t know that you read any other books beside that one”

“It‘s not here” Nora said quickly “I left it in Columbia”

Jack looked down at her “Why? Nora you love that book why would you leave it behind?” Jack couldn’t make any sense of it. He knew that besides him and ballet that book was one of the things that she couldn’t live without.

“Because…” she hesitated “My whole life is in Columbia and when I left there I had to leave it behind”

“That is silly” Jack said into her hair “that book is the one thing that remind you of hom-”

“Exactly…” Nora snapped, Jack squeezed her on the shoulders and she trailed off “Let me finish” he said “I meant -before you interrupted me- that book reminds you of home. Everything. The people and everything else. Why would you want to leave it behind when it was the one thing that reminds you of were you came from”

Nora turned her head to look at Jack in the eyes “I had to leave it” she whispered “you were there. You were still in Columbia and I left it behind because I left you behind”

Jack kissed her on the head “you didn‘t leave me behind. I choose to stay” he whispered. Nora clenched her eyes together to keep the tears away.

“Sorry” she said

“You don‘t have to apologise to me…you know that.” -Nora turned her head up to throw Jack a quick smile but he only saw it out of the corner of his eye- “There is something I have that I want to you see” Jack

leaned over to his suitcase without letting go of Nora. She watched him curiously as he pulled it next to him. He opened his a fraction and put in his hand, he felt around until he found the thing that he was looking for. He pull out the piece of paper and quickly closed to suitcase to keep its contents secret to Nora. He wasn't sure if he wanted to show her what's was in there but he knew that she would start crying and he didn't want those kind of emotions around right now. The feeling in the room was stable and he didn't want to change any of that.

Nora looked at his hand and squinted her eyes suspiciously. "What do you have there?"

Jack shrugged his shoulders he held his hand out in front of Nora "What is it?" she asked again.

Jack slowly opened his hand to show Nora.

She gasped when she saw what was in his hand, and Jack could feel the mood of the room shift around him.

"Is…that" Nora struggled to find words, Jack nodded. "The first page of…"

“Mansfield Park” Jack said finishing her sentence as she trailed off. “your first page of Mansfield park. You left it on my bed, and I found it when I got home”

“You still have it” she whispered “I was starting to think that you had forgotten about it…I starting to worry that I would never see you again”

“Now how could you think that” he whispered into her hair “We have all a better guide in ourselves, if we would attend to it, than any other person can be.” he quoted from Mansfield Park.

Nora turned her head and looked at Jack “Where did you get that from?” she asked and smiled flicking at the edges of her mouth.

“You of all people should know were I got that from”

“No, no” Nora said quickly “I Know were it‘s from but, what. You actually read the book” Nora let a small giggle slip between her lips she bit back on her tongue to prevent breaking out in fits.

Jack grimaced

“Sorry” she said quietly looking away from him “but it hard for me to image you reading that book… why did you read it?” there was a curl to her voice that hinted suspicion.

“Well…I know that you love that book, its important to you, and well I wanted to see what all the fuss was about”-he rolled his eyes- “so I thought that I‘ll read it and see. I liked it” there was a smile to his voice.

“You know Jack” Nora said quickly; she didn’t want to look at him “You didn‘t have to do that”

Jack was confused. “What?”

Nora was hesitant their was something that she wanted to say to Jack but she was scared to hurting his feelings.

“Honey you can tell me” Jack prodded her as nonchalant as he could.

“I‘m afraid to hurt your feelings”

Jack couldn’t find any reason for her to hurt his feelings, if anything he would be the one to hurt her feelings “That’s stupid” he comforted her, stroking up

and down her arms lightly with his finger tips. He could feeling gooses bumps raise underneath her skin. “Don‘t be afraid of that. I want to know”

“Jack…you right. That book is important to me, and well…I was oping that it could stay that way. I mean you know we have everything together but I mean you don’t do ballet and I don‘t play piano those are things that we have to ours selves. How would you feel if I came into your house and started to play you piano”

Jack smiled “I‘d think you are sexy” he whispered into her ear

“No’ Nora said firmly “I mean you also have hunting. What do I have? … I think if we had things that were just for us…you know” Nora wasn’t sure how to word it, but she knew that Jack would understand. And he did.

Jack burst into fits of laughter suddenly. Nora looked up at him horrified “I‘m serious Jack” she said coldly over the top of his laughter.

“Oh honey…” he said in between his laughter “You can have that all too yourself if you want…I don‘t mind. Is that it? That‘s something rather silly to worry about” Nora turned her head and grimaced at him. Jack s laughter slowly faded away at the sight of her face.

“Sorry” he mumbled.

Nora‘s face smoothed out “So your okay with it and all?” Jack pressed his lips together and nodded.

‘Thank you’ Nora mouthed then turned her attention to Jack suitcase. She pulled her legs up to her chest and sat up. Jack watched her weary of what she was doing. Nora leaned over his legs and pulled the suitcase over to her.

It was already open, she lifted the lid and looked inside. The first thing she noticed was the photo of him and her.

A smile flickered at the edges of her lips “I remember this” she whispered “That was the day that we found the ‘Secret Place’” Jack could hear the quotations marks in her voice. “That was a long time ago” She

put the photo to the side; there was resentment in her voice that Jack didn't understand.

Jack reached out and took her hand before she touched the sheet. She looked up and met his gaze. He pulled her hand closer to him, then rested it on top of the tie-pin that was now attached to his tie. It didn't match but he didn't care. Nora smiled at the tie-pin.

"I left the dress at the house as well" Nora admitted "I didn't think I would need it for anything here, if so I wasn't going to wear it. I only reminds me of you"

Jack smiled he moved in and kiss her lightly on the lips when they parted Jack whispered "I proposed to you in that dress"

"Yes you did"

Suddenly Jack remembered the piece of sheet in his pocket. Nora watched as he dug his hand through his pocket when he pulled it out Nora's eyes every slowly widened. She looked at her bed-side table back at Jack's hand and back again.

“Oh sorry…” he said when she saw the shock in Nora’s eyes “I saw it when I came in I forgot to put it back” Nora ripped it from his hand, she slid off Jack and stood up straight. She ran over to her desk, opened the first draw, shoved the square of material, then closed the draw again. She stood staring at the desk draw panting.

Jack didn’t know what had happened, he could put it together. He didn’t understand.

He slowly rose off the bed taking extra care not to make the floor boards creak he crossed the room to Nora. She didn’t notice him and jump slightly when he rested him hand on her shoulder.

“What was that” he said.

Nora panted “Nothing”

“It didn‘t seem like nothing to me” Jack extended his arm beyond Nora and slowly opened the draw. Nora didn’t try to stop him. Jack picked the sheet out of the crack in the draws with his fingers.

“What is this” He held out in front of Nora, but she didn’t answer “Did you make this, it‘s rather good”

Jack pointed to the two little people in the centre of the material “Is this us?” Nora still didn’t answer, but she nodded to him.

“I love it” he whispered, he wrapped his arms around her waist and pulled her slowly back to the bed.

“I made it” Nora said slowly and quietly. Jack sat her next to him, keeping his arm secure around her waist.

“My mum taught me when I was younger, I remembered how do it and one day I was upset so I came back to my room and started to uh… that” her fingers found the material and she held it with Jack.

“I think its fantastic. Is it us?” Jack asked again Nora nodded “Well…” Jack said reaching behind Nora for the sheet in his suitcase.

“Are you skills up to the challenge?” He asked draping her sheet over their shoulders. Nora didn’t have to press her nose into the sheet to smell her scent that was so thick on the sheet. To he it hadn’t change it still felt the same as they last time she had seen it.

“You kept it” Nora looked back at Jack confused.

“Nora, I never let it go” Jack was lying through his teeth but he knew that it was for the best for Nora.

“Well, its about time you retuned it to me” Jack watched as Nora snuggled herself into her sheet, sniffing in the smell feeling the soft tread that held it together. She looked back at him, and met her gaze. Jack could see himself marveling her reflected in her eyes.

Jack’s crooked smiled faded and Nora noticed “I‘m sure I can take on the challenge whatever it may be” she said, wonder if he was upset due to the lapse in conversation- but Jack didn’t say anything. He just stared at Nora expressionless.

“Jack?” she said worried “What‘s wrong” she waved her hand back and forth in front of his face but he didn’t move.

His eyes slowly focused back in on Nora’s face “Jack?” she asked again anxious.

“Nora” he whispered “I… I… I‘m not good enough for you”

“What?” Nora said shocked “What do you mean, your not good enough for me. How can you say that?”

“Nora I‘m not exactly telling you the whole truth” Jack said quietly.

Nora looked at him studying his face and she knew that he was telling her the truth. But she didn’t know what the other truth was.

“What is the truth then?” Nora demanded.

“In Columbia…” Jack started “there was somebody else” he couldn’t bare to look at Nora as he confessed of Sarah “she…she was nice. Her name was Sarah White”

“Oh” she said quietly “And were you two um…” Nora didn’t know what to say.

Jack nodded his eyes intent on the floor “Yes” he said quietly.

“Oh” Nora said again “Oh, oh, oh” Jack looked back quickly at her. “you two were oh” Nora began wiping her lips “oh you can‘t be serious. Shit, bad mistake, bad mistake”

“No” Jack said quickly, Nora continued to wipe her lips her face was disgusted, for a spilt second she looked like her mother.

“No” he said again louder then before, he reached out hand grabbed her hand that was still wiping her lips. She stopped and looked at him worried.

“I‘m going to hell aren‘t I?” Nora said worried, Jack thought that through for half a second then began to laugh “Jack that‘s not funny, I kissed an engaged man, I thought dirty things. That‘s like a double sin” Nora ripped her hand away form his.

Jack laughed more at her antics “Nora you aren‘t religious, that doesn’t count”

“Jack your engaged” Nora stressed “why did you even come here, to drop off you invitation?”

Jack lifted his hand and pressed one finger to her lips. “Shh…correction I was engaged. I ended it. And the only wedding you‘ll be going to is our own. I can understand of you don‘t want to be with me now what I did was unforgivable” Jack dropped his finger

and quickly replaced it with his lips, pressing softly against hers.

“Are you mad” Jack asked once they had parted.

Nora breathed there noses touching “No…I‘m not. Because you chose me”

Jack smiled and then kissed her again “I‘ll always choose you” Jack wrapped his arms around her waist and pulled her in closer to him. He smiled and pulled her down with him, there heads hit the bed at the same time.

“God… it seems like all you do in life is just knock me over” Nora joked, Jack expression told her that he didn’t really understand what she meant.

“I mean.. what would have done if I wasn‘t staying in this student house. Do you even know how many student houses there are?” Nora asked.

“No”

Nora shrugged “Neither do I. There‘s forty-one acres of hilly grass fields I barely know where I am on campus” she half-laughed “But what would have you

done if I wasn't here? Run around the dorms all night screaming my name or would have tried another student house before morning"

"I don't know" Jack admitted "But I wouldn't have given up. I guess I'm just lucky"

"So…" Nora breathed "What do we do now?"

Jack looked into her eyes thinking over his answer "Not sure. But I do know something that I have to do."

"Kiss me ?" Nora laughed.

Jack shrugged "Wasn't exactly what I was thinking but all right" Nora raised her eye brow at Jack "Excuse me? You had other ideas?"

Jack rolled his eyes "Please. Shut up and kiss me" Jack took Nora's face in her hands and pulled it into his. He smashed his lips against hers she moved her arms slowly up the sides of his arms, and wrapped them slowly around his neck, she pulled him in closer to her until their bodies were pressed against each other.

“I love you” Nora gasped when her lips parted briefly. They finally parted, jack held Nora in his arms. He breathed into her hair, it sent chills down her spine.

“I really want to do this for you” he whispered

Nora frowned “You lost me… Do what?” She didn’t know what he was talking about.

“I made you a promise” Jack said in a low voice “and I forgot that promise. I shouldn‘t have, but I did. Know I want to make it up to. I want to keep my promise”

Nora sighed “The house?”

“It‘s my promise to up-`keep” Jack kissed her on the head “And I will up-keep it”

“What do we do now?” Nora repeated. There was a long silence as thought of different ways to go-about the situation. Nora breathed deeply, her heart beat was the only sound in the room.

Jack finally broke the silence “I‘m going to leave”

“What?” Nora demanded, she sat up straight and looked at him perplexed, on the verge of tears.

“You misunderstood me” Jack pulled Nora back into his arms, wrapping around her securely.

“I have a plan. It should work… not that it‘s really complicated”

Nora sighed “You should make yourself more clear next time” Jack kissed her on the head again.

“And you have to stop kissing me on the head. You might end-up leaving a bald patch” Nora laughed “So…instead, why don‘t you just kiss me on the lips?” Nora turned over and kissed him on the lips. “Much better” she said “So what’s the plan?”

“Right” said Jack focussing again “Christmas break… it‘s in one week. Nora think it our chance to go. We can disappear, to the lake. Start our new life together. Never look back”

“What do we do about money?” there was strain in her voice.

He kiss her on the head and laughed “I can‘t help it” he said “Nora, don‘t worry. We‘ll cross that bridge when we come to it. I think me parents put some away for me. I don’t know why you are arguing against this. It is what you‘ve wanted since you were nine. You can leave this place. Never come back, I‘m still surprised you‘ve lasted this long in this place.” Jack stopped, he took a deep breath then buried his head in her hair “I should have never let you leave me. It was a stupid mistake. I never want to be apart from you ever again. Please. This is our chance that we have been waiting for.”

Nora pulled his hand tighter around her “Then hold onto me and I‘ll help you” she whispered, as she quoted him.

“Exactly. Why is it taking me so long to convince you” there was silence. No one talked, the room was filled with a heavy silence.

“My mother” Nora finally whispered after a while.

“What about her? Won‘t you be glad to get away from her, you won‘t have to talk about her anymore. You won‘t have to think about her. Nora you will be

four states away from her, isn‘t that enough breathing space”

“Yes, No. It‘s I just…” she started to laugh.

“What?” Jack asked.

Nora continued to laugh, tyring to find her breath so that she could answer Jack “It‘s just, I‘m finally going to have the life that have been wishing for all these years”

“You are, with me” She kissed his hand “I‘ll feel bad if we completely exile her from our lives”

Jack huffed “I think it‘s what she deserves, after what she has done to you”

Nora yawned and rolled over “I guess” she kissed him on the lips. “So what kind of house are you building me?”

Jack didn’t know, he hadn’t thought about it at all. “What kind of house do you want me to build”

Nora shrugged “I have always loved you house, can I have one like that. But with bigger windows so we can have the morning and afternoon sunlight.”

“I think I can do that” Jack breath into her ear

“Can I go to sleep now?”

“Yes” Jack sighed. “My, this bed is uncomfortable” he laughed once “I feel so sorry for you”

Nora was already semi-conscious “Yes, you should. Don‘t worry…you‘ll get use to it. Not tonight though”

Jack began laughing, louder and louder, until a girl in the room next to them banged her fist on the wall.

“What is it?” Nora asked “What so funny?”

Jack kept laughing “Ha, ha. It’s just…I never came back!”

“What?” Nora didn’t understand what she was saying

“Nora. I never came back”

Nora gasped white light flooded her eyes; she looked around through her unfocussed eyes, people where walking past her wearing white the same colour as the walls.

She forgot where she was until; she was reminded by the sing across from her that said ‘Burns unit’ with

and arrow pointing to the right where a large set of double door stood closed, concealing away the depressing sight.

The hospital.

There was light pressure to her shoulder, she jumped slightly.

“Sorry to scare you” said a young women now older that Nora, her name tag announced her as Joyce. She blended in with the other people in white.

“Mrs. Finn?” She asked, Nora nodded, covering up the fact that she wasn’t really Mrs. Finn but they would only talk to family members of any relation.

“Follow me please” Joyce said helping Nora up. She led to the end of the corridor to the double doors. She out her hands on hem to open but Nora stopped her before she could.

“I have to ask you something…how bad is it?”

Joyce Looked into Nora’s eyes. Pain. Scared. Worried. Hurt. She could see the sleep deprivation was costing her her humanity. “It’s…not could” Joyce spoke

truthfully “We have spotted the bleeding, which is could. But there ad been other extensive damage, burn and bruising up to eighty percent of his body”

Nora choked back the bile in her throat, and held the tears in her eyes; she slowly nodded and lifted her hand of Joyce’s.

She swung the door open and began to walk, she led her half way door the corridor before she stopped and gestured Nora through. It was a small room with one chair sitting next to the hospital bed, where he lay. Propped up bandaged like a mummy.

Jack.

Nora slowly moved into the room, to get a better look at him. He didn’t look the same. He was completely different, like he was a different person. Half is face was composed of different shades of pinks and purples even a bit of yellow around the eye. The other half was dressed in banges but Nora could see a small patch by his chin that wasn’t, it was shinny and bear the colour of rear meat. Nora’s stomach churned.

Was he alright could he feel any pain. Was he in pain? she twisted her engagement ring around on her finger, she was helpless there was nothing she could do.

“Can he hear me?” Nora asked Joyce whom was standing at the end of his be observing his condition.

“Yes” She said “He can, it’s best if you talk to him, and that way he might come back”

Nora turned to look at Joyce “Is there a chance that he won’t wake up?”

Joyce nodded “The bleeding did cause some damage to his brain, and his immune system is weakened. Talk to him, you might be surprised”

“About what?” Nora asked, Joyce walked to the door of the room and turned around “Anything” she said “What ever comes to mind” then exited the room.

Nora stiffly sat down on the chair next to him. She didn’t know what to do what to say. What could you say to someone that was in coma? And you didn’t know if they could hear you or not.

“Hi” Nora tried; it was a weak attempt to begin with. But she tried again “Jack?” she looked at him up and down “I… I don’t know if you can hear me or not, but I…I need you to come back. Okay, you have to come back, because I can’t face the world on my own. I don’t know…what it must have been like over there, in Peal Harbour. I don’t if you where scared. I what you did, or what really happened” the words came more easily to Nora, as she expressed many suppressed emotions “I don’t if you where scared, or even if you where thinking about me.” There was a long silence as Nora thought of other things to say.

“What did you do it?” she asked a question that may never be answered “I still don’t really know why you joined the army, was it really for Jonathan? How could I know? I missed you Jack, You were a constant in my mind, and I thought about you every night before I went to sleep and you were always the first thing that I pondered when I woke up.” She quoted him “But know I need to wake up, it’s your turn. Jack you have always taking me into the light, but know I sit here in utter darkness, and I don’t know if I can make it through it” she looked around the room there

was a picture of a forest across from his bed, it looked like the forest where they used to play. “I… have moved into the Wylie house, for now I mean. Because you promised me that we will live together there when everything was over, and that we’d even go a d live in France. I can speak quiet good French so that will help us out a lot, and we can live on a hill where there are green pasters as far as the eye can see… Did you here that Benjamin married Georgia Reid? I’m not sure if you did or not. They have a house near Wylie, I haven’t seen it yet. But I’m happy for him, not really sure if he truly loves her or not but they were always have been vain enough for each other, so I thought that is they could do it so could we…” Nora looked at one of his unbandage hand that’s was the colour of a blueberry. She reached and touched it. It has the remains of heat barley passing through it. She wrapped her finger around them holding on tight.

She almost forgot, the book lying on her lap. “I bought and old favourite…I thought you’d like me to read it to you, I mean I wasn’t sure is you would be able to hear it but the nurse said you can hear me so

I thought…" she opened the cover of Mansfield park, holding it open with one hand while keeping hold of his other. "About thirty years ago Mrs. Maria Ward of Huntingdon with only seven thousand pounds, had the good luck to captivate Sir Thomas Bertram, of Mansfield Park in the country of Northampton…" Nora read to him until evening fell and the sky outside became darker she didn't notice when the light was switched on to accommodate her reading. "You know I never thought that the first time you would every read this book, I would be reading it to you from a bed" the night drew on and she finally felt the pull on her eye lids; she put the book down, rested her head on top of her arm on the bed and went to sleep.

Nora's peaceful dreams of reunitement where disrupted by a long steady beep, that blared in motion with no change to the tone.

Many doctors and nurses, rushed into the room at once yelling things over the top of one another, one nurse took Nora around the shoulders and pulled her back. Nora looked around the room that was speed

into a flurry. The book fell from her lap and landed open on the floor.

She started to pant, tears, welled in her eyes. “No” she said “Stop” she yelled out

“Ma’am you’ll have to stand back” said a thin doctor pushing her to the back wall, she tried to see past bodies as they covered up the only one she was interested in, one man pushed down on his chest, she saw the rise and deflation as another breath into his mouth.

“Jack, no!”

Nothing happened; everything slowed down Jack’s body lied on the bed, covered in bandages, limp. Not moving, still. The doctor working over him became slower they stopped on looked at his watch, then at the other doctor.

“Call it” he said. Words, mere words, they meant so must to Nora.

“No!” she cried as she pushed her way through past the people to the edge of the bed where he lay. “No”

she whispered again “it doesn’t have to be this way, you’re a good man. You don’t deserve this. You don’t”

“Time of death, two-twenty-three”

“No!” Nora shrieked buried her in the side of his body, it felt colder now underneath the bandages. Her knees went weak and she fell backwards onto the chair. She pushed away anybody hat dare disturb her or Jack. If they tried to move her or the body she would started to cry and yell at the person through her tears.

“Why?” she whispered into his dead ear “Why, did you have to go? It wasn’t your time, you can’t leave me. What about everything you promised me huh? What about that? It not fair on any of us Jack!”

He had always been there in her life, always with her, physically, emotionally nor spiritually. He had always made her fell warm, laugh and cry. She had always loved him and now he had gone as quickly as he had come into her life. She wouldn’t forget him, but could she honour his wishes, and not mourn hid death, she didn’t know if she could or not. She looked at him

through watery eyes. She couldn't bear it, she hid them.

His face was so serene, so peaceful she had never seen anything like it before. Never once where is so soft under the touch of her finger.

Jack.

To her he would always be perfect.

At peace.

And now, she watched him walk away from her, drawing light from all around it followed him, but also stayed behind to blanket her, as he left her behind.

Morning. Dull. Ominous. Lifeless. Jack. His body she still laid in front of her, untouched, undisturbed.

There was a light knock at the door, and young women, this with ginger hair and blue eyes was standing in front of Nora, with tears stained eyes that matched Nora's.

"Who are you?" Nora asked arrogantly, the women took Nora's tone to distaste. She walked into the room

slowly keeping her eyes locked on Jack in the bed. Nora took one necessary cough. “Excuse me? Who are you?” she became more and more impatient with the women.

“I’m Sally Finn…His Wife”

Chapter 18

The Socialite [17] The Voice

Chapter Seventeen

The voice

“Who did you think I was?”

Nora did listen past the word ‘wife’ she still hadn’t quiet comprehended it. Wife. Married. What? She’s his wife?

“Excuse me?” Nora choked out she picked the book up off the ground and stood up next to the bed “I don’t know who you think this is but, this is my husband” Nora causally lied through her teeth about

being married, but it was to happen, now that it only wouldn't. Ever.

"Pardon me, but if you don't mind…"

"Nora" she said through her teeth

"Nora… right Nora, nice name, but if you don't mind I would like to be alone with my husband to say my goodbyes" Nora could see that what Sally was feeling was genuine. She was hurting.

There was another knock at the door, but both women kept there eye on each other. "Excuse me Mrs. Finn" both heads turned to face the nurse. It was Joyce; she had a worried look on her face. "There is a phone call for you" she gestured to Nora, she whipped away a stray tear and walked forward to the door, she stopped "I'll be there in a minute" she told Joyce, she nodded and walked forward.

Nora watched from the door, Sally walked stiffly around the bed to the chair that Nora had sat in; she stared at the limp body in the bed, she gasped flying her hand to her mouth then collapsed in the chair.

“Oh…James” she cried “Oh, dear. What am I going to do?” Nora noticed that she was holding onto something around her neck, possibly a church necklace. “What am I going to do? What about Lucy and Michael”

They had children? Or just she had children?

Nora dropped her head and walked down the corridor looking into the various room as she went something men had visitors around there beds some men she awake and reading. All unaware of the loss. She walked past on of the last rooms and noticed the man lying in the bed; he was awake reading the news paper, but he looked bad. As bad as Jack, bruised and burnt, kind of like what Nora felt now.

“Riley?” she said, the man looked up. “Oh my… Hello” she said walking into the room.

“Nora? Hi” he put down the paper on his lap, his face cringing with pain. “What are you doing here in a place like this?” he asked, obviously happy to have someone to talk to.

“Well…” Nora wasn’t sure how to tell him the news. He was Jack’s best friend “Jack is here, about four room down, and well… something happened. I …I don’t know what exactly, but they couldn’t save him.”

Riley’s smiled fell “Oh my…”

Nora could feel the tears coming back the sting in her throat “Gosh Riley, I don’t know what to do. It happened to quickly. You have to tell me Riley, what was it like over there. What was it like?”

Nora could sense his reluctance.

“Nora, I don’t know is should tell you, what it was like, but it can say…it changes you, like you wouldn’t believe, at first you don’t realize, but when you think that your about to die, you reflect on it, and you see. You a better person on the inside, sure you now how to kill, and it doesn’t feel good, but you get a better take on life. A renewed perspective. You think about things differently, you respect the life you have and are so much more thankful for it. Out of all of us Jack had changed the most, he would talk about you so often that I couldn’t stand to be near him…he truly loved you more than you could imagine, he didn’t die

in vain Nora. What happened to him was unfair and it shouldn't have happened to a guy like that, but it did, I know that he would have been scared, he's at peace" Nora wiped away a drifting tear.

"Thank- you Riley" she leaned in a kissed him gently on his bruise cheek. Her lips where cool against his enflamed skin.

"Mrs. Finn, your phone call" Said Joyce's voice from behind her

"Oh right" Nora said running out of the room, to quickly to thank Riley for a second time.

She turned the corner, Joyce handed her the Phone.

"Hello" she said. There was silence on the and of the phone

"Is this, Nora Katherine Anne Greenhill?" asked a familiar voice, Nora gasped as she realized.

Jack……

About the Author

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